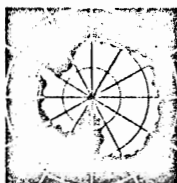


ANTARCTIC TREATY  
NINTH CONSULTATIVE MEETING

ДОГОВОР ОБ АНТАРКТИКЕ

ДЕВЯТОЕ КОНСУЛЬТАТИВНОЕ СОВЕЩАНИЕ

Agenda Item 3



LONDON

TRAITÉ SUR L'ANTARCTIQUE  
NEUVIÈME RÉUNION CONSULTATIVE

TRATADO ANTARTICO

NOVENA REUNION CONSULTIVA

ANT/LX/67

29 September 1977

OPENING STATEMENT BY MR J G McARTHUR  
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF NEW ZEALAND

Mr Chairman,

It gives the New Zealand delegation much pleasure to be in London for this, the Ninth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. I would like to congratulate you, Mr Chairman, on your election to guide our deliberations and to thank the British Government most sincerely for the arrangements made on our behalf. The burden on the host government for this particular meeting has been especially heavy with two Extended Preparatory Meetings and numerous more informal gatherings. We are appreciative of the work of the conference secretariat throughout this year, and particularly of Dr John Heap's efforts to ensure that all delegations were fully acquainted in advance with all of the items on our agenda.

It is appropriate to hold this meeting here in London, for it was here that the foundations for the "heroic age" of Antarctic exploration were laid. Britain has a long and distinguished history in Antarctic exploration and research, from the time of Ross, Scott and Shackleton through to Sir Vivian Fuchs. Many of those British expeditions sailed from New Zealand and included New Zealanders in their parties. The hardships endured by those early explorers, who laid the foundations for the later development of scientific activity in the Antarctic, are remembered in our country. The area of Antarctica which they explored is now the Ross Dependency, with which New Zealand has had a lasting association.

I should also like to thank the French Government for their having organised the extremely valuable Special Preparatory Meeting which I had the good fortune to attend in Paris last June and July. This meeting expanded the concept of regular consultations between us on Antarctic matters. It has given us a new and valuable mechanism which allows us to isolate and focus on individual matters of pressing concern. I think we will find ourselves using Special Preparatory Meetings more frequently in the future. Indeed we believe that the time has also come for the Consultative parties to return to the practice followed in the early years after the Treaty entered into

force of meeting on a more frequent basis than has been the practice in recent years.

At this point I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to our Chairman at the Eighth meeting, His Excellency Mr Edward Hambro, whose wisdom, wit and sound commonsense we shall sorely miss in our counsels. I would ask the Norwegian delegation to accept our most sincere sympathy on the loss of such a great man.

This is an historic meeting in that for the first time since the signature of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 the twelve original signatories are joined at a full Consultative Meeting by a country which has earned its right to take its seat at this table by clearly demonstrating that it is "conducting substantial scientific research activity" in Antarctica. New Zealand welcomes most warmly this extension of the Antarctic group and in extending our congratulations to the Polish delegation we are sure that they will bring fresh thoughts and ideas to our consideration of the many problems which confront the Treaty governments. In particular we shall welcome the views of Poland as a new member for the fresh insights they may offer on the difficult questions which we have been grappling with over recent years in the Treaty context.

The New Zealand Government is pleased to note that considerable progress has been made in preliminary consideration of the marine living resources issue - and we are hopeful that with sufficient political will there will be further progress in the next three weeks. The fact is that new, non-traditional living resources of the Antarctic have already become the subject of commercial investigation. The exploitation phase is now at hand. We believe that following from the special responsibilities that the Treaty powers have accepted in respect of the Antarctic environment it is incumbent upon them to establish appropriate conservation measures, as a matter of urgency, for the protection of the entire ecosystem. We would hope that it will be possible at this meeting to agree on the principles upon which

a conservation regime would be based. It may also be desirable to adopt some limited interim measures in this regard pending the negotiation of an appropriate convention or other instrument, perhaps at a special meeting in the coming year.

The New Zealand delegation would also like to see positive progress made on the vital issue of mineral resource exploration and exploitation. We do not underestimate the enormous difficulties which have to be overcome, but remain convinced that, if the Treaty is to survive, an early solution to this most pressing problem must be found.

We have certain expectations of any regime to control mineral exploitation. First, it should limit and carefully regulate exploitation activities to ensure the widest possible protection of the fragile Antarctic environment. Secondly, the regime would need to ensure, in some practical way, that the special interests of certain countries in the Antarctic are accommodated. And, thirdly, that it is necessary to bear in mind the ultimate need for acceptance of any resources regime by the international community at large.

The Paris Meeting was an extremely useful forum enabling a wide range of views to be aired. As a result of that meeting, we have established a good base, and we look forward to a continuation of the dialogue at this present meeting.

In the opening statement by my delegation at the Paris Meeting, we spoke of the atmosphere of increasing external pressure which surrounds consideration by the Treaty Powers of the most important topics before them. Since Paris, nothing has occurred to invalidate that statement - indeed, to the contrary. I would not say that Consultative Meetings in the past have been meetings for the cognoscent alone: but they certainly had a different quality from that which must inevitably mark them today. It is difficult to avoid a deeper feeling of the responsibility which we, as the Treaty Powers, have assumed in

our preoccupation with the affairs of Antarctica; or that we must be conscious in all we do that our actions now have a wider public. They need therefore to carry with them a conviction that what we decide is arrived at not as a result of narrow considerations but in the best interests of all. It is in this spirit that my delegation will consider most carefully all ideas which may be put forward.