

INTERVENTION BY AMBASSADOR J. ALAN BEESLEY, CANADA, IN GENERAL COMMITTEE, 28 AUGUST 1978.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I had not intended to intervene on this question and indeed would have preferred, as you have suggested, that if it were raised it would have been done in Plenary, but I do feel constrained to make some observations now in light of the statements just made.

A reference was made to those countries whose companies or nationals are engaged in deep seabed activities. I believe the reference was inadvertent in that it appeared to be a statement on behalf of all such countries. I wish to make quite clear, however, that the statement was not made on behalf of Canada and should not be so interpreted.

My Government and my delegation draw a sharp distinction between the right to develop ocean technology - and those deep seabed activities directed to that end, in the absence of a treaty - and the actual exploitation of the seabed in the absence of a treaty. My Government supports the first but does not support unilateral action intended to take effect in advance of a treaty.

I sympathize with those governments and those national legislatures who are becoming impatient with the pace of our negotiations. I would urge those governments, however, and indeed, through them, the legislatures in question, to exert a little more patience in light of the very signal progress we have been making, particularly at the last session Geneva, which is universally regarded as the most productive session to date.

I say this in light of years of experience in this field-shared with many of those here today-which have demonstrated repeatedly the inaccuracy and the invalidity of the many statements which are made outside the Conference about the urgency of unilateral action because of the need to begin next year - it's always next year and has been for the last ten years - the need to begin next year the actual mining process. We have always said that we expected that such activities would begin sometime in the mid-1980's and I believe that is generally accepted now. But even in such event we do not see the urgency of such legislation. I mean this as no criticism of any legislature or of any government. I wish merely to make quite clear that anyone speaking on behalf of those countries whose nationals or companies may be involved in activities on the deep ocean seabed is not speaking on behalf of my Government, and I am quite sure that any such interpretation was wholly unintended and wholly inadvertent.

I would only like to draw attention to one other fact. The one consortium that has proven out its technology, which happens to be led by a Canadian company, announced its successful technology tests during the last session, but it also announced that it was setting aside further development for the time being. That to my mind was the appropriate course and I think that should be borne in mind when we hear, not from anyone present in this room, not from any administration, not from any government, but from others who have their own particular axes to grind, that there is a tremendous urgency about getting on with unilateral legislation in many countries.

I believe that what has just been said by other speakers is sufficient indication of the possible adverse effects upon this Conference of such unilateral legislation. Whether we agree with these statements or whether we don't, I submit that they have to be taken very, very seriously. We are not merely talking about the effect of such legislation upon those negotiations dealing with seabed mining. It is quite clear that we have been proceeding from the outset on the basis of an inter-related set of principles, an inter-related set of problems, an inter-related set of solutions. We have made magnificent progress - in spite of all the detractors. We have solved so many issues that seemed completely impossible - quite beyond solution - just a few years ago, and I would urge newcomers to the Conference to go back over some of the Summary Records and some of their own delegation reports to see just how much has been achieved, and at such cost - time, money, and the cost on people. People have come here and to Geneva again, and again, and again in an honest effort to solve these problems. I feel also that no one in this room should be subjected to any criticism for the kinds of pressures that have been created to pass this kind of unilateral legislation. I feel we are all embarked together in what is a very worthwhile collective effort.

Having said that, I want only to reiterate that I understand the impatience on the part of those who support unilateral legislation. I don't share it, and I hope that some further patience can be exercised.

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.