

RESOLUTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in its Nineteenth Ordinary Session in Rabat, Morocco, from 5 to 12 June 1972,

Considering that the exploitation of the maritime resources of the seas and oceans bordering on the African coasts constitutes for the African States a hope for future generations and a source of capital interest for their present-day economies,

Aware that the exploitation of such resources can be undertaken for the benefit of the African economies only within the framework of international regulations which take into account the interests of all countries and groups of countries,

Convinced that the Law of the Seas at present in force does not take into account the interests of the African countries, and that its revision was the subject of a recommendation by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly through the convening of a new conference on the Law of the Sea,

Informed of the important debates, which have taken place in the United Nations Committee on the Sea-bed, which meets periodically in Geneva and New York, in which debates the African Group plays a conspicuous part,

Bearing in mind resolutions 250 (XVII) and 238 (XVII) of the Seventeenth Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, which was held in Addis Ababa in June 1971, which affirm the permanent sovereignty of the African States over the sea-fisheries off their coasts,

Realizing that the complexity of the various problems bound up with the question of the Law of the Sea requires that OAU Member States define in a precise manner their political positions on

each of the subjects which will be debated at a conference on the Law of the Sea in the light of precise information which should be provided for them,

Convinced nonetheless of the imperative need for OAU Member States to concert on all the points and to harmonize their positions in order to present a common front on the occasion of any confrontation on the Law of the Sea,

RECOMMENDS

1. that the OAU General Secretariat refer the matter, at the earliest possible date to the African members of the Committee on the sea-bed, which will be requested to prepare and send to Member States a comprehensive memorandum convening the problems as a whole that will be debated at the United Nations conference on the Law of the Sea and the position on each of these problems of the various participating States or groups of States, together with any suggestions or recommendations which might help the States determine their positions;
2. That OAU Member States study with all speed, the document which would thus be submitted to them by the African Group and send their comments to the OAU General Secretariat at the earliest possible date;
3. That the OAU General Secretariat convene, before the Session of the Council of Ministers in February 1973, a meeting of experts for the purpose of harmonizing the view-points thus expressed by the member States and to draft an African declaration which would be submitted to the OAU Council of Ministers in February 1973 and to the Assembly of Heads of State and government in May 1973.