

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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ORAL QUESTION (O-21/81)

with debate, pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure by Mr VAN AERSSSEN, Prince SAYN-WITTGENSTEIN-BERLEBURG, Mrs CASSANMAGNAGO CERRETTI, Mr HERMAN, Mr JANSSEN van RAAY, Mr MÜLLER-HERMANN, Mr d'ORMESSON and Mr JONKER
on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (CD) to the Commission of the European Communities

Subject: Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea
- The Community's responsibilities under the Rome Treaties in the area of the exploitation of the resources of the sea bed were stressed in Parliament's resolution of 9 April 1981

- In its answer to Written Question No 24 (H-847/80)¹ of April 1981 the Commission stated that for the moment there was no justification for autonomous Community rules for deep-sea mining operations.

- There is no likelihood of a thorough review of all that has been achieved so far in the negotiations within the framework of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea, although the USA has reserved the right to revise its position, and as a result the

¹debates of the European Parliament No 270

consensus principle will continue to dominate the further development of international law.

The pre-enactment-exploration stage of private-enterprise deep-sea mining is now beginning, and this will have an impact on the availability and, ultimately, the commercial exploitation of sea-bed deposits from 1988 onwards.

The Commission can assume an important role in balancing the international interests of North and South through the Lomé conventions. The Lomé II Convention provides an appropriate framework for agreeing coordinated political solutions to the unresolved questions of deep-sea mining.

We therefore consider it necessary to make use of all possible legal and economic means, which will also, as far as the Community is concerned, strengthen the principle of making agreement by consensus in the North-South Dialogue, in order to make deep-sea mining more economically viable in the approved areas.

1. Is the Commission merely making use, in the context of its overall responsibility in the maritime sector, of the powers available to it in the areas of customs territory and economic policy, or is it also exerting a stronger influence on the exploitation of raw materials from the sea?
2. Will the future co-signing by the Community of the Law of the Sea convention encourage the Community to find its own ways of using the sea's resources?
3. Is the Commission aware of the proposals for a specific European initiative in formulating international law by means of:
 - a) exemplary Community guarantees for investments made by joint ventures involving European firms and deep-sea mining interests in countries signatory to the Lomé Convention, and
 - b) financial support for basic research which could be carried out within the framework of joint ventures of this kind?
4. Could the idea of joint ventures of this kind not form part of the Commission's efforts to try to harmonize the interim laws on deep-sea mining adopted by various Western countries?