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Provisional Agenda Item 6

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ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES
(Paper submitted by the United Kingdom)

1. The mandate for discussion of Antarctic Marine Living Resources at the IXth Consultative Meeting derives from the tenth recommendation of the VIIIth Consultative Meeting, the operative requirements of which may be divided into three main headings:

(a) the inclusion of the subject on the Agenda of the IXth Consultative Meeting;

(b) the need to initiate or expand scientific research programmes and the co-operation of the Treaty partners therein;

and (c) the development of effective measures for the conservation of the resources.

2. The first of these requirements has been fulfilled, so far as is possible at this stage, by the inclusion of the subject on the Provisional Agenda for the IXth Consultative Meeting. The second requirement was advanced substantially by the recent meeting of the SCAR/SCOR Group on the Living Resources of the Southern Ocean, held at Woods Hole, USA, last August. In accordance with paragraph 4 of Recommendation VIII-10, that meeting undertook a thorough survey of current work and, in reporting on "programmes for the study and conservation of Antarctic marine living resources", developed a programme for the Biological Investigation of Marine Antarctic Systems and Stocks (BIOMASS). In the view of the United Kingdom Delegation the BIOMASS programme provides a basis for exploring whether steps should be taken to facilitate co-operation between Consultative Parties to ensure economic and productive use of research and logistic capabilities.

3. The development of effective measures for the conservation of resources is not yet under active consideration and the United Kingdom Delegation considers this aspect should be studied and discussed by the Consultative Parties.

4. The need for such measures was clearly indicated by the SCAR/SCOD Group on the Living Resources of the Southern Ocean in their report of the Woods Hole meeting, published in SCAR Bulletin No. 55, which stated:

"Arrangements should be made as soon as possible to ensure the conservation and rational utilisation of these important resources. The group recommended that SCAR should draw the attention of the parties concerned to the need for such arrangements, which should include the collection and reporting of information (especially from commercial operations), scientific studies (especially the assessment of the state of stocks), and agreement on specific management measures and their implementation."

The Group further defined the type of information needed thus:

"As a minimum, information resulting from exploratory and commercial fishing vessels must include catch and effort statistics in sufficient detail, sample size and other biological characteristics of the animals caught."

5. Recommendation VIII-10 recognised the need to promote and achieve, within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty, the objectives of protection, scientific study and rational use of these marine living resources. In the view of the United Kingdom Delegation this need might best be served by focussing attention, both at this preparatory meeting and at the IXth Consultative Meeting, on the following closely related questions of scientific study and rational use:

(i) the development of measures which will assist the forthcoming scientific investigations through the compilation, correlation and dissemination of basic data on marine living resources; and

(ii) the development of measures for the conservation and rational use of these marine living resources.