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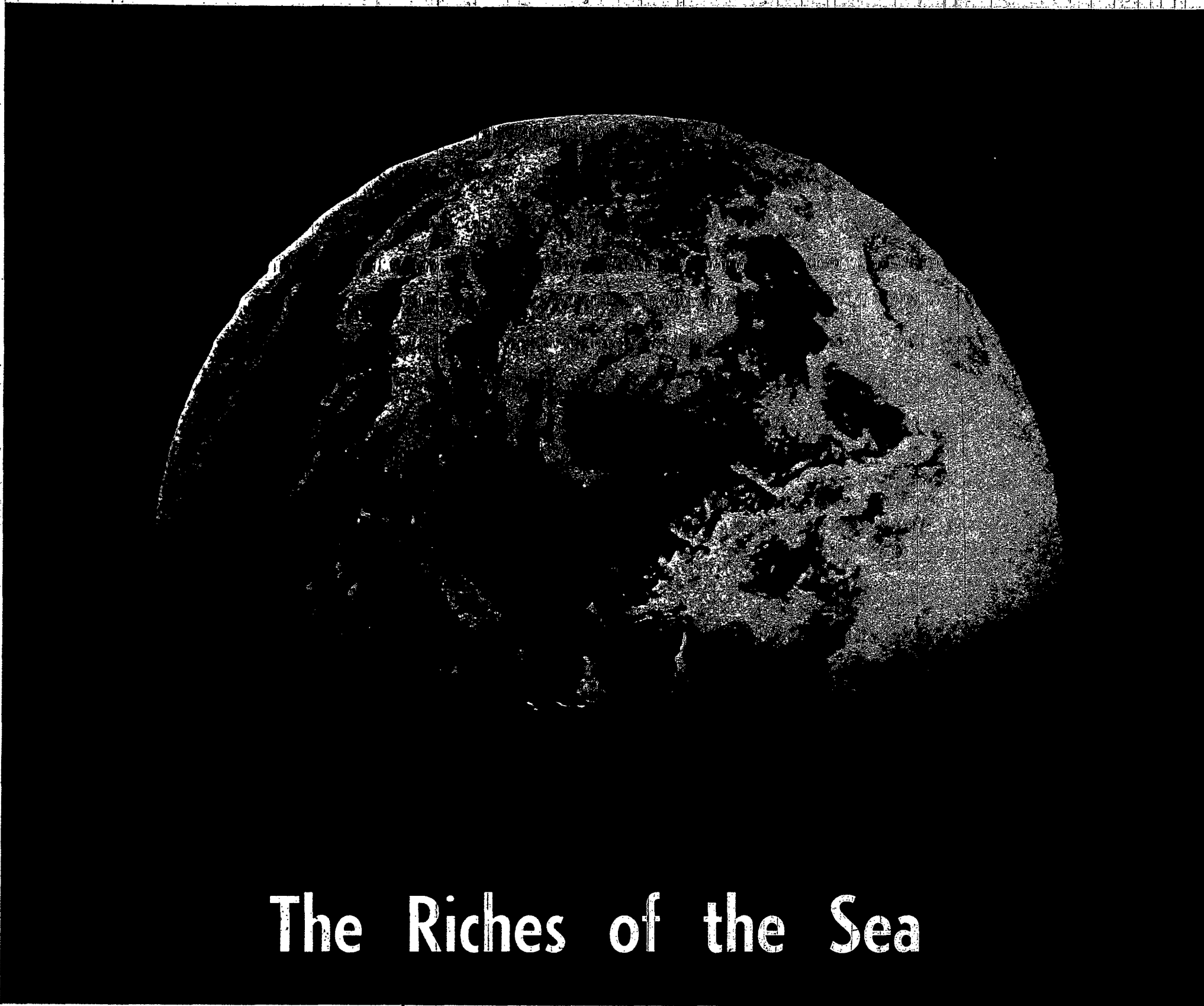
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The Riches of the Sea

U.N. Studies 'International Regime'

United Nations, N.Y. — (RNS) — After three years of difficult negotiations on how to exploit the riches buried under the seas and how to insure that this last untapped "common heritage of mankind" is justly distributed among the needy, the U.N. General Assembly adopted resolutions outlining a tentative timetable for legal and practical steps in this effort.

Ambassador H.S. Amerasingh of Ceylon, chairman of the Sea Bed Committee, told newsmen that the laboriously worked out compromise was a "remarkable achievement" and a "momentous decision" representing the foundation of the future regime to govern undersea exploitation.

But he also called the result "only the end of the beginning," saying that the next stage of the problem is "discussion in great detail" on how to go about implementing the tentative guidelines and decisions hammered out in long sessions.

That discussion will continue in an enlarged Sea Bed Committee which will have 81 members.

The Assembly first adopted a declaration of 15 principles covering the sea bed and ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. This declaration is intended to be the basis for an international regime applying to this area.

The 127-nation Assembly then adopted a resolution asking Secretary General U Thant to study the impact of the exploitation of the minerals of the sea bed on the economy of developing countries, and also to study

the special problems of land-locked countries in regard to the exploitation and exploration of the resources of the sea bed.

Next, the Assembly agreed to convene in 1973 a conference on the law of the sea to deal with the establishment of an international regime for the sea bed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as with a broad range of related issues.

The 1973 conference also would deal with other questions relating to the sea bed and its resources. These include a precise definition of the international sea bed area; the regimes of the high seas, the continental shelf, the territorial sea (including the question of its breadth and the question of international straits) and contiguous zone; fishing and conservation of the living resources of the high seas; the preservation of the marine environment, including the prevention of pollution and scientific research.

There are many remaining issues, including the all-important question of priority of settling the issue of territorial waters and spelling out the exact nature and authority of the proposed international regime to run future operations beyond the territorial waters.

Many of the developing countries, especially those claiming as much as 200 miles off their shores as water under their national sovereignty, want the question of the international regime settled first. The Communist countries and others which, like most other nations, claim only 12 miles off their shores, want to first agree on what areas of the seas would be subject to the international law.

The United States, which has a draft treaty on the table before the Assembly, has been a prime mover behind efforts to hurry up with the proposed conference lest countries with available technology to exploit the sea bed stake out national claims—or more countries extend their national jurisdiction over the 12-mile limit. The Soviet Union, Western negotiators say, does not like the idea of an international controller. The Communist countries also dislike the proposal to reopen at the 1973 conference issues on which there already exist international conventions, though perhaps outdated or imperfect.

The "international regime" is a diplomatic expression that covers such things as international principles and laws, and an agency to control the exploitation of the sea bed. The Soviets consider that there is a strong danger that such a regime will infringe on the national sovereignty of states. At the same time, the USSR is not completely sold on the idea of the multi-lateral distribution of the wealth of the sea bed and the oceans.

According to other Western and East Europe sources, the Soviets, and with them their allies, except Rumania which often gravitated to developing countries' views, give the highest priority to the issue of settling the territorial limits before doing anything else. They want all countries to accept the 12-mile limit.

The Communist countries therefore abstained on the declaration of principles which mentions the need for the international regime. Rumania voted in favor of it.