

Letter to the Editor of a Newspaper on the Need of Making Indian Ocean a Zone of Peace.

To

The Editor,

The Times of India,

Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,

New Delhi-110002.

Sir,

The incursion and increasing military built up by the super powers of the world in the Indian Ocean is a matter of great concern. The strategic and economical importance of the Indian Ocean is well-known. About 45 countries are included in the category of its littoral and hinterland. It is the main channel between the East and the West. The countries of the Indian Ocean region are rich in natural and mineral resources including fossil fuels. About 75% of the total oil resources of the world are located in this region. There are a number of naval bases on the islands of Diego Garcia, Aldabra, Desroches, Asmara, Masirah besides Vacoas base in Mauritius, Gan and Mahe in Maldives, Asmara in Ethiopia and Masirah in the Arabian Sea.

These bases and the increased naval movements in the Indian Ocean have given rise to an unprecedented arms race between different nations. The resulting tension and cold war power rivalry are too obvious to be ignored. Therefore, it is not unnatural that many countries in this area feel their freedom and territorial security in danger. This sense of insecurity has further increased because of the movement of nuclear-powered vessels in this ocean area.

It is high time that Indian Ocean is declared a 'Zone of Peace' forever and all meddlesome military forays of the Great Powers stopped and their bases dismantled. This area should be absolutely free from nuclear weapons. A resolution to this effect was brought before the U.N. General Assembly on 16th December, 1971, which said, "The General Assembly solemnly declares that the Indian Ocean, with limits to be determined, together with the air space above and the ocean floor adjacent thereto, is hereby designated for all time as a zone of peace." Again, this resolution was debated and passed in 1972. The U.N. General Assembly also appointed an Adhoc Committee for the implementation of the above resolution, but so far nothing concrete has emerged for a speedy and strict implementation of the 1971 resolution.

One main reason for not declaring Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace is continued conflicts and rivalries between many countries of the area. These and many other littoral states have been paying only lip-service to the peace zone idea. But the urgent need of a new and bold initiative in this regard can hardly be overemphasized.

Yours truly,

December 18, 1990

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