

INTRODUCTION

Tomorrow's world might suffer dreadfully in conditions of rapid disintegration following the dwindling and then almost abrupt disappearance of some of the classical natural resources. For the time being, our cars use petrol, while natural gas burns in many of today's dwellings and factories. But these are nonrenewable natural resources which—according to the data available—are doomed to inevitable exhaustion within a future that can be counted in decades. Side by side with other natural resources, they form the object nowadays of many different legal regimes of study as regards States' rights to them, forms of ownership and utilization and the conditions in which they are offered for international commercial exchanges.

I wish this book to make a contribution to the juridical settlement of the problems arising in the world in connection with the utilization of the world's natural resources. Sovereignty over natural resources is a reality which cannot disappear overnight, very much as multinational companies cannot. The problem of the access of all States to raw materials for the benefit of mankind as a whole cannot be solved through a policy of confrontation but only through cooperation. Very much as UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim showed in a report addressed in 1977 to the fifth session of the Committee for Natural Resources,¹ cooperation between States in this field would set the finest example of an international program focussing on scientific and technical problems whose importance and scope very much exceed the power of one country alone. Sovereignty over natural resources should not prevent but, on the contrary, support future international economic cooperation, which is still facing many political, economic and juridical obstacles. International law and lawyers everywhere can make a valuable

1. E/C/7/67/Add.1.

contribution to removing these obstacles. In this sense, the present work is a plea for establishing new economic relationships between the world's States, for instituting a better atmosphere of international cooperation.