Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank you once again for introducing draft resolution L.60 on the Question of Antarctica, which we have just adopted as orally amended by my delegation. My delegation is pleased that the Committee was once again in a position to adopt a draft resolution on this subject by consensus. My delegation also wishes to express appreciation to the delegation of Sweden, representing the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCP), for the cooperation extended to us in the consultation process as well as to the ATCP countries. We are also pleased with the support from Member States to the draft resolution.

2. I should like to recall on this occasion that the Question of Antarctica was first mentioned in the General Assembly during its 37th Session in 1982 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Allow me to quote some of the salient points in his address to the General Debate of that Session. These are as follows:

“It is now time the United Nations focus its attention on Antarctica. A number of countries have gone to claim huge wedges of Antarctica for their countries. But the fact still remains that these uninhabited lands do not legally belong to the discoverers as much as the colonial territories do not belong to the colonial powers. Like the seas and the sea-beds these uninhabited lands belong to the international community. The countries presently claiming them must give them up so that either the United Nations administer these lands or the present occupants act as trustees for the nations of the world. Presently, exploitation of the resources in Antarctica is too costly and the technology is not yet available. But no doubt the day will come when Antarctica can provide the world with food and other resources for its development. It is only right that such exploitation should benefit the poor nations as much as the rich. We are aware [that] the Antarctic Treaty concluded by a few nations provides for their cooperation for scientific research and prohibits non-peaceful activities. While there is some merit in this Treaty, it is nevertheless an agreement between a select group of countries and does not reflect the true feelings of members of the United Nations or their just claims. A new agreement is required so that historical episodes are not made into facts to substantiate claims.”
3. The words by the then Prime Minister of my country were uttered under a different backdrop twenty-three years ago. Nonetheless, much of what he referred to then remain relevant today while, admittedly, significant strides have been achieved in other important areas in relation to Antarctica. The circumstances currently prevailing concerning the Question of Antarctica demand a modified approach from the international community, bearing in mind the inter-linkages between development and social development, and peace and security in our common endeavour to chart the course for our future.

Mr. Chairman,

4. My delegation is greatly satisfied that the international community has now become more aware and more concerned about the particular significance of the Antarctic continent. We remain hopeful that Antarctica would remain preserved as the common heritage of mankind. We would seek to ensure that the United Nations would remain seized of the Question of Antarctica and we stand ready to discuss this subject in future Sessions of the General Assembly, if necessary.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.