

**AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF THE LAW OF THE SEA TREATY**

We believe that God has given us great gifts of knowledge, technical skill and natural resources; we further believe that God expects responsible stewardship of these gifts, not exploitation. Christians are held accountable by God to be vigilant and prayerful stewards of the gifts given to us, including the wonderful gift of the globe on which we live.

We believe that Christians are called to work for peace and justice throughout the world, acting out of a faith which proclaims the Lordship of God over all things and the love of God for every person. We believe that the resources of the ocean and seabeds should be used wisely and well for the benefit of all people and nations, not just for the benefit of those who are able to snatch them quickly and exploit them selfishly.

For more than a decade the United States was involved in negotiations for a comprehensive oceans treaty called the Law of the Sea. Presidents from both major parties supported U. S. participation in the negotiations and movement toward a treaty, as did congressional and business leaders representing both parties and a broad spectrum of viewpoints.

In April 1982 the drafting was completed and the treaty was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the world's nations, including many industrialized and maritime nations. The U.S. was one of only four nations to vote against the final treaty. On July 9, 1982, President Ronald Reagan announced that the U. S. would not sign the Law of the Sea Treaty, primarily because the section on deep seabed mining did not meet the objectives of the U. S. Government and industry.

In 1994 President Bill Clinton signed and submitted to the U. S. Senate a revised version of the Law of the Sea Treaty addressing many of the original objections to the treaty. This version has not been ratified by the Senate. President George W. Bush has urged the Senate to ratify the treaty as has the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The Law of the Sea helps to assure orderly harvesting, controlled exploitation and equitable sharing of results in such fields as natural gas, manganese nodules, and fisheries. It provides a framework for conducting research, guaranteeing freedom of navigation and conducting marine research. The vast majority of U. S. allies and adversaries have become signatories to the treaty. It is not a perfect treaty, but it is a good treaty.

We believe that the treaty is correct in identifying the resources of seabeds and ocean floors beyond national jurisdiction as the "common heritage" of humanity, and we believe that the treaty creates a basis for nations to put that concept into practice. By signing and ratifying the treaty, the U. S. would have the opportunity to participate with other nations in creating structures and rules of international cooperation.

Therefore, the General Board of American Baptist Churches in the USA:

- ✂ urges the Senate to ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty
- ✂ urges the U. S. Administration and Congress to develop avenues and means for enhancing the workability of the treaty;

- ✂ calls upon American Baptists to inform themselves and others about the Law of the Sea, and to seek support for Senate ratification;

- ✂ directs that its staff send copies of this resolution to the President and appropriate leaders of the Administration and Congress.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1983
161 For, 3 Against, 2 Abstentions
Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1990
Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2006
(General Board Reference # - 8106:6/83)

POLICY BASE

Policy Statement on Military and Foreign Policy

Powerful and wealthy nations must be held accountable to recognize that they have received their power from many sources and they have an obligation to use and restrain that power for the common good.

Global understanding and cooperation are essential to the pursuit of peace. Our welfare is fundamentally linked to that of all people. National actions and priorities continually need to be reassessed in light of this global interdependence.

International economic systems must transcend narrow national self-interests and provide a framework for global justice and peace.

Policy Statement on Human Rights

...Nations are intended to live in community...Nations and individuals have responsibilities toward the whole community.