POLITICAL COMMITTEE

CEESA MUN

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Forum: Political Committee
Issue: The Question of Negotiating Bolivian Access to the Pacific Ocean
Officers: Daniel Vardi Jimeno
Position: Chair
I. Introduction

The issue of Bolivia’s right to access the Pacific Ocean has been an ongoing conflict since the late 1800 hundreds, during the war of the Pacific (1879 - 1884), when Bolivia and Peru both ceded the mineral rich sands of the coastal Atacama Desert. Since this war both Peru and Bolivia have been attempting to regain their land ceded during this war.

Over the years, Peru received some of land back, due to the United States intervening and overseeing the signing of the Treaty of Lima. However, Bolivia hasn’t received their land country and remained a land locked country until 2010, when the President of Peru, Alan Garcia, signed a lease for 99 years with the President of Bolivia, Elo Morales. This deal allowed Bolivia to build a port on the 1.4 square mile strip of land, which now allows Bolivia participate in international maritime trade. Nonetheless in 2015, the International Court of Justice at the UN (United Nations), rule that it would allow Bolivia to negotiate for its right to access the sea, during a formal hearing.

II. Definition of Key Terms

The War of the Pacific:

The war of the Pacific was stemmed from conflict between the economic interests of Bolivia and Peru’s natural hostility towards Chile. The conflict was stemmed because of the undermining of an agreement between Chile and Bolivia, which agreed that Chile would relinquish its tax share for the exports of nitrate, and Bolivia would not increase
taxes on any Chilean enterprises for 25 years, 5 years later, Bolivia tried to increase taxes on the Chilean Antofagasta Nitrate Company and later threatened to confiscate the territory belonging to the company, causing Chile to occupy the port city of Antofagasta. On February 14 1879, Bolivia declared war and was later joined by Peru.

The Treaty of Valparaiso:

The Treaty of Valparaiso, was a treaty signed between the countries of Bolivia and Chile, during 1884 which ended the war of the Pacific, with an armistice. This treaty forced Bolivia, to accept the Chilean occupation of all the Bolivian coast.

The Treaty of Ancon:

Under the treaty of Ancon (1883), Peru and Chile both accepted upon an armistice and forced Peru to cede the province of Tarapaca and regulated the use of nitrate and guano to repay Peru’s debts back. The treaty also allowed Chile to occupy the provinces of Tacna and Arica, for ten years, after which a plebiscite was to be held to determine the nationality of the region.

The Treaty of Peace and Friendship:

This treaty signed 1904, ceded all the region of Antofagasta to Chile and allowed Bolivia to have mechanized access to the coast, with allowing the construction of a railroad that would connected La Paz, with the Chilean coastal city of Arica.

The Treaty of Lima:

Under United States supervision, allowed for Peru to regain the lost province of Tacna, however Chile was to keep the province of Arica.
The Desert of Atacama:

The Desert of Atacama was the cause of many conflicts between Bolivia, Peru and Chile, particularly because of its nitrate rich soil.

III. General Overview

Sea Access:

To Bolivia the access to the sea that the region of Antofagasta would allow, is indispensable, this territory would allow Bolivia to export and import produce, via sea instead of air travel or land travel, which would prove difficult because of the Andes Mountain Range.

Desalination:

Around the world, countries are beginning to experience desertification, which happens due to lack of water but also due to deforestation, which in turn causes water shortages as water can no longer stay in soil. Having access to the sea would prove invaluable when water is a rare commodity and Bolivia builds desalination plants to provide clean water.

Cultural Heritage:

To Bolivia, Peru and Chile, the region of Antofagasta could be considered part of their cultural heritage.
Mining Industry:

The mining industry located in the Atacama Desert is no secret, mining more than 30% of the world’s copper production of the world, and other minerals from this Desert may prove to be indispensable to a country whose economy isn’t diversified and depends on finite resources to make a profit.

IV. UN Actions Towards Solving the Issue

Overall the International scene seems to have agreed to have Bolivia have a chance to debate their right to access the Pacific Ocean, the latest meeting in relation to the issue was in September 29th 2016, when the UN (United Nations) authorized the right to reply to Bolivia and the right to rejoinder to Chile.

Furthermore, in 2011 the case was brought before the International Court of Justice where it was determined in a vote 14 against 2 and despite Chilean objections that the Bolivian request for the Court to declare that Chile has an obligation to negotiate with Bolivia in order to reach an agreement granting Bolivia full sovereign access to the pacific. That Chile has breached this obligation and that Chile must perform their obligation promptly and in good faith.

V. Major Countries Involved

Bolivia:
Bolivia is the driving force of this ongoing issue. Every year Bolivia submits a resolution to demand the territory of Antofagasta from Chile.

Peru:

Peru, is another driving force in this issue, despite signing the Treaty of Lima, they still hope to regain their territory lost due to the Treaty of Ancon.

Chile:

Chile is the current occupier and owner of the provinces that both Peru and Bolivia, wish to be returned, and is very interested in keeping this land as the mining sector of Chile is currently dominated by the minerals and metals found in the Atacama Desert.

**VI. Possible Solutions**

Below is a list of possible solutions for delegates to use as a starting to point when writing their resolutions:

Renewal of the Chilean proposal of 1975:

In 1975 Chile proposed a swap of land in the Atacama Desert where Bolivia would receive a long narrow continuous corridor of territory bordering Peru to the pacific in exchange for an equal amount of Bolivian land. However the land was formerly Peruvian and Chile needed Peru’s approval to trade the land which was rejected by Peru at the time.

Return of territory without Tariffs:
A major reason contributing to Chile’s refusal to return the disputed territory is the rich minerals there. Chile might be more willing to accept proposals if guaranteed a continuation of all Chilean resource exploitation in the area without tariffs from Peru or Bolivia. This could also help lessen any economic damage Chile might suffer as a loss of the land.

Ceeding Chilean Coast Line

It would be possible for Chile to give or trade sovereignty over a stretch of its coast line to Bolivia without any connecting corridor and simply grant Bolivia the right to move anything between Bolivia and its newly acquired territory. The advantage to this would be that Chile would still control the Atacama Desert and its quantities of nitrate and copper.

VII. Conclusion

Bolivia’s access to the Pacific Ocean bridges together the political significance of water with political tensions between Member States. When writing their resolutions, delegates should be able to defend their position of this issue and justify their approach in dealing with it. Delegates are also encouraged to devise diplomatic solutions to address this issue in order to reach consensus and an outcome favorable to all parties involved.
VIII. Bibliography


