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ST. JOHN'S CONFERENCE SEEKS LEGAL SOLUTIONS TO HIGH SEAS OVERFISHING

St. John's Conference on the Conservation and Management of Living Resources of the High Seas

September 4, 1990 - Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, International Trade Minister John Crosbie, and Fisheries and Oceans Minister Bernard Valcourt today announced the opening of the Conference on the Conservation and Management of Living Resources of the High Seas being held in St. John's, Newfoundland from September 5 to 7, 1990.

International legal and scientific experts attending the St. John's Conference will examine problems relating to high seas fisheries in light of the principles for conservation and management of these resources in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The "high seas" includes the area outside the 200 mile zone which is not under coastal state jurisdiction.

Problems relating to the management of straddling stocks and highly migratory species, and harmful practices such as driftnet fishing are major topics for the Conference. "Straddling stocks" are fish stocks that occur both inside and outside the 200 mile limit, and which are therefore vulnerable to overfishing on the high seas.

"The goal of effective conservation and resource management in fisheries outside 200 miles is embodied in the principles of international conduct set out in the U.N. Law of the Sea Convention," said Mr. Crosbie. "Canada has taken up the challenge of striving for international acceptance of the practical measures needed to make the U.N. Law of the Sea Convention work as it was intended. Increased international understanding and co-operation is vital if we are to succeed in this and thereby achieve effective conservation and resource management of fisheries on the high seas."

The U.N. Law of the Sea Convention calls for the establishment of regional (international) organizations to conserve and manage straddling stocks. For Canada's Atlantic coast, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is the regional organization established in accordance with the U.N. Law of the Sea Convention.