

Informal consultations on law of sea

thus tended to be very broad and sometimes diffuse, with a variety of proposals advanced to make the UN system more responsive and dynamic. Despite the continuing scepticism of many member states, consensus was reached on a resolution that reinstated, as a permanent special body, the Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Review established at the twenty-ninth session. It may be expected that a wide variety of ideas for enhancing the functions of the UN, including proposals for procedural and structural changes not involving amendments to the Charter, can be considered by this committee over the course of a number of sessions.

Although there was no substantive debate on law of the sea matters in the General Assembly, many delegations took advantage of the presence of their experts in New York to hold informal consultations. By any standard — the number of states participating, the size of delegations, the variety and importance of issues — the Law of the Sea Conference convened under United Nations auspices was the most significant international lawmaking effort undertaken by the international community in many years. The General Assembly adopted Resolution 3483 (XXX), on December 12, 1975, approving the convening of the next session of the Third Law of the Sea Conference from March 15 to May 7, 1976, in New York, and the convening of a possible further session.

The Second (Economic) Committee considered over 50 resolutions, from the UN University to the UN Children's Fund, but the main focus of the discussion was the mid-term review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy for the Second UN Development Decade. The need for continued forward movement on a new international economic order, following from the seventh special session, was a challenge Canada took seriously. The result will be judged by history but, in the view of many, there are grounds for optimism on the progress so far made. In general, the spirit of compromise manifested at the seventh special session was sustained. Though not all developing countries were satisfied with the outcome of the special session, they appeared willing to suspend final judgment until all the results were in, and meanwhile to take part in constructive dialogue. This is a reassuring sign for future talks within the UN, the Conference on International Economic Co-operation and other international economic groupings.

The 18-page Resolution 3517 provides a general mid-term appraisal of the Second Development Decade. It lays the blame

squarely on the developed countries for any failure to meet objectives, while those targets that were met have been credited to the developing countries or external factors. Nevertheless, Canada voted in favour of the resolution in the belief that renewed efforts were needed if those goals were to be attained during the remainder of the decade. It took exception, however, to the call to facilitate the role of associations of producers without mention of consumers' associations, and would have preferred a generally better-balanced review and appraisal in language more consistent with the specific agreements and climate of the seventh special session.

Habitat

The major Canadian initiative in the Second Committee related to the arrangements for the *Habitat* Conference on Human Settlements. After delicate negotiations, Resolution 3438 was adopted on December 9 without a vote and the way was paved for the signing of an agreement between the United Nations and Canada as host country. The unanimity achieved, which was specially gratifying to Canada, ensured that subsequent preparations would proceed in the proper atmosphere for a conference of this kind. The agreement itself, which was signed on December 23 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, and the Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN, covers such matters as conference services, media facilities, transportation and financial arrangements.

The "monolithic" voting of the Third World, which drew much attention at the twenty-ninth session, had by the thirtieth session begun to reveal internal pressure. Extreme and, to some, offensive resolutions could still be adopted by the General Assembly, but only with narrow majorities that changed in composition. This has shattered any former belief that the General Assembly was in some way an international legislative institution with voting along "party lines". There are also indications that states are more prepared to weigh the consequences of their votes and to take their responsibilities as members more seriously. Nevertheless, positions on many questions remain as divergent as ever, and much remains to be done to strengthen the consensus approach and bring about a reconciliation of the needs and views of the new majority with those of the old majority of founding members. In spite of its best efforts to accommodate their views, Canada will probably continue to find itself, on certain matters of principle and practice, in a minority position.