

member, can achieve progress. The prospects for the hostage-taking committee appear, however, somewhat more hopeful since (a) its mandate is more focused than that of the Committee on International Terrorism and (b) there are indications that African and Arab states may be prepared to support international measures in respect of this kind of terrorist activity.

The nature of the results achieved by these two committees will, in the longer term, help to provide an indication of future prospects for strengthening international legal measures against terrorism within a UN context.

The debates over several years on various proposals for strengthening the role of the International Court of Justice and of other mechanisms for peaceful settlement of disputes similarly have revealed widespread caution, particularly on the part of developing states, which perceive the Court and much of the traditional corpus of international law as being too status-quo oriented. The opinion has sometimes been expressed that the Court tends to view the world "through a rear-view mirror". While an objective assessment of the Court's judgments in past years would not support such a sweeping criticism, it is a fact of international life that states have resisted efforts to broaden acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court and have shown great reluctance to refer their disputes to it.

Nevertheless, in many areas the UN has played a dynamic and innovative role in contributing to a stable world order through the progressive development of international law. This role has been most evident where states have come to recognize a growing sense of interdependence -- for example, on the need for rational management and conservation of the earth's resources and on the development of an international economic system leading to a more equitable distribution of those resources.

The UN Conference on the Law of the Sea has been working out a new legal regime governing man's use of the oceans, designed to be practical, equitable and responsive to current needs and realities. The range and complexity of the issues at stake are probably unprecedented and a successful outcome is by no means assured, despite general recognition that full account should be taken of the aspirations of the developing countries to benefit from the resources of the oceans.

A significant aspect of the Law of the Sea Conference has been the important role played in the negotiating process by a number of special-interest groups that, reflecting the variety of interests at play, differ from traditional political, geographic or economic alliances. For example, on issues relating to preservation of the marine environment, the "coastal-state group", which includes both developing and developed countries such as Canada, has taken positions at odds with positions advanced by the "major maritime powers". On many issues, the developing countries have taken a common stand, while on others there have been differences between those developing countries that are coastal states and those that are "landlocked" or "geographically-disadvantaged".