

What, then, can we expect from the next session of the conference which will start in Geneva in less than three weeks?

Quite frankly, the mandate of the conference is so complex and the remaining differences of views so serious that we cannot realistically expect the Geneva session to terminate its task every single item. What we can aim for is very substantial progress -- progress of such magnitude that we shall be in a position to see the precise contours of the package and to determine the timing of the final conclusion.

Let me be very clear. What we are seeking is an international negotiated solution to a series of interrelated problems of political and economic importance. Such an international solution is by far preferable to unilateral or even regional action. The time is of the essence, not only for Canada but for a lot of other countries.

We shall not stand for a simple referral of the issues to one more session unless we have reason to be confident in an early successful conclusion. That is a judgment the Government will have to make at the end of the Geneva session. As my colleagues and I have said repeatedly since Caracas, should the conference fail or procrastinate, we shall reassess all options and decide how best we can cope with our most urgent problems -- and the fisheries question is obviously high on the list -- in the light of prevailing circumstances.

The fundamental objectives I have just described are those that will guide the Canadian delegation when the next session of the Law of the Sea Conference opens in Geneva on March 17. On that delegation, as at Caracas, there will be representatives of the fishing industry as well as from the mining and shipping sectors. Parliament and the interested provinces will also be represented on the delegation. My colleagues the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of State for Fisheries and I intend to spend time at the conference. That indicates the importance we all attach to this next round of international negotiations. We hope that all of the efforts we have made over the years will result in complete success and better protection of Canada's vital interests in the oceans.

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