

THIRD UNITED NATIONS LAW OF THE
SEA CONFERENCE

EIGHTH SESSION

The eighth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea was held in two stages: the first in Geneva from March 19 to April 27, and the second in New York from July 19 to August 24. In response to the clear determination of many delegations to achieve concrete results, the first stage was marked by the issuance of a revised negotiating text (ICNT/Rev. 1) incorporating new or amended articles on a wide range of important issues which had hitherto blocked progress in the negotiations. Areas covered by the new articles, which are key components in a global oceans regime, include sea-bed mining issues, the definition of the outer edge of the continental margin, rights of access of land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states to the living resources of the economic zones in the same region or sub-region, settlement of disputes relating to the exercise of coastal state sovereign rights over fisheries in the economic zone, and protection of the marine environment.

In New York, some of the outstanding sea-bed issues were resolved, and the range of divergences on those remaining was narrowed. The resumed eighth session thus forms a bridge to the hoped-for concluding phase of UNCLOS. In particular, the Conference has now, for the first time, made a commitment to enter into the decision-making process in 1980. Delegations will therefore have to come to the ninth session prepared to finalize texts and to formulate, not a negotiating document, but a draft convention.