



Statements and Speeches

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LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE -- I

A Statement by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at a Press Conference in Geneva on May 8, 1975.

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I am in Geneva for two purposes: I have come to make a personal appraisal of the results of the Law of the Sea Conference and to express the Canadian position on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which I did yesterday in a statement in plenary. The Law of the Sea Conference, however, is the main reason for my presence here. I am interested not merely in the progress made in achieving Canadian objectives but in the progress in the conference as a whole, since Canada is deeply committed to the attainment of a global constitution of the oceans. This presupposes that the interests of all states must be taken into account. In order to assist me in making this appraisal, I have been consulting with the Canadian delegation and a number of other delegations -- not only those that support Canada's position on the issues at stake but also those that take a different position. I have also consulted with the officers of the conference, including its president, Ambassador Amerasinghe of Sri Lanka.

I am generally well satisfied with the progress made in attaining Canadian objectives at this conference, and even before it in various informal negotiating groups during the period between the Caracas and Geneva sessions. I hope and expect that this progress will be reflected in the unified text that will emerge from this conference. Unfortunately, perhaps, the negotiations at this session of the conference have been confidential, and it is only recently that the results have been emerging and becoming known to the public.

On fisheries the progress has been dramatic. At Caracas the positions of the territorialists at one end of the spectrum and the distant-water fishing states at the other end of the spectrum were so far apart that the gap seemed almost unbridgeable. It was our view, however, that there was a way of bridging the gap through the conception of the economic zone. In Caracas, some countries considered the economic zone a kind of quasi-territorial sea of 200 miles. We heard from other delegations that it was simply "high seas" under another name, with only certain narrow preferential rights accorded to the coastal state. During this session at Geneva we have found for the first time that countries supporting these two opposing
