

COSMOS 954: LEGAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE CRASH
OF A SPACE OBJECT IN CANADIAN TERRITORY

On the juridical level, the crash of a Soviet satellite in Canadian territory on January 24, 1978 has had two main consequences: (1) the preparation of the Canadian claim for "damages" suffered, and (2) the impetus given to the development of a regime to protect man and his environment from the use of nuclear power sources in space. The preparation of the Canadian claim is an ongoing event as the claim must be presented within one year from the date of the crash according to the 1972 Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects. Canada raised the question of the use of nuclear energy in space at the fifteenth session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee of the U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). At the session of COPUOS held in New York June 26-July 7, the participants agreed to the creation of a group of experts to work within the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee to study the technical aspects and the security measures relating to the use of satellites transporting radioactive material. As well, COPUOS has recommended that the state responsible for launching a satellite that carries radioactive material inform a state that runs the risk of being affected thereby.