

One of the most important developments at this session was the emergence of draft proposals on the question of sharing by land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states of part of the living resources of the Exclusive Economic Zone of their regions and sub-regions surplus to the needs of coastal states. The text still requires a number of clarifications but nevertheless represents a significant step forward in efforts to find a compromise solution to one of the hitherto most intractable issues at the Conference and one that could determine its success or failure.

There was general recognition, however, that the question of rights of land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states is closely linked to the resolution of the question of the definition of seaward limits of the continental margin. While the seventh session ended with no decision on this issue, the Canadian-Irish formula, based on natural features of the continental margin, continues to command substantial support as a basis for a final compromise, despite the last-minute alternative USSR proposal based on the artificial depth or distance criterion. Canada, of course, was one of the authors of the Irish formula, and, with extensive areas of its margin extending well beyond 200 miles on the East Coast, attaches the highest importance to a satisfactory resolution of this issue at UNCLOS. The Canadian delegation expects that a final decision can be reached on this issue as part of an overall package including a satisfactory solution to land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states access question contingent upon acceptance of the Irish formula.

Remarkable progress was achieved in the area of settlement of disputes as it relates to the exercise of sovereign rights of the coastal state in the Exclusive Economic Zone. A compromise text was proposed offering a substantially improved prospect of consensus which would not impose compulsory settlement of disputes procedures on sovereign rights of the coastal state to manage, exploit and conserve living resources within the Economic Zone.

Finally, on maritime boundaries delimitation, although no compromise texts were agreed, there were promising indications on the basis of the proposals of the chairman of the negotiating group on the issue that delegations might ultimately agree to provisions which ameliorate deficiencies of the Informal Composite Negotiating Text (ICNT) articles by giving greater emphasis to the principle of equidistance and ensuring application of binding third-party settlement procedures in the event states fail to achieve a negotiated settlement.