

If one excepts the relative success achieved in respect of the Continental Shelf Convention, the efforts of a number of coastal nations to obtain a broader jurisdiction over their adjacent waters were to no avail as the more conservative maritime states held fast to the traditional view of the Law of the Sea whereby beyond coastal state sovereignty in a narrow belt of territorial sea, a regime of virtually unlimited freedom should prevail.

The result was an impasse as it proved impossible to set a precise limit to the territorial sea or to grant states the right to establish exclusive fishing zones beyond.

The inability of the first Conference to settle those issues made it necessary to convene a second Conference which met in 1960. Notwithstanding a Canada-U.S.A. compromise proposal for a six-mile territorial sea and a six-mile exclusive fishing zone beyond, which failed by only one vote, the second Conference was as powerless as the first in resolving the intractable limits questions.

The Third Conference

It is against this background that a third attempt is being made to develop the Law of the Sea on a world-wide basis. The elaboration of rules of universal application would of course be more conducive to the establishment of a lasting order on the oceans but given the importance of the varied and often conflicting interests at stake, the negotiating process is expected to be lengthy and arduous. Evidence of these difficulties has been found within the context of the Conference's preparatory body, the United Nations Seabed Committee, where three main groups of interests can be singled out.

The major maritime states certainly wish to have a share in the resources of the sea and in particular in those in close proximity to their shores, but their main concern lies in keeping