

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS
AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS

As part of its strategy to combat overfishing by foreign vessels just outside its 200 mile zone, in 1989 Canada launched a multilateral initiative to further develop the rules of international law, embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), that govern high seas fisheries. These rules provide, *inter alia*, that coastal States and distant water fishing States shall "seek to agree" on conservation measures for straddling fish stocks (stocks that straddle the 200 mile limit) and that they shall "cooperate" to establish such measures for highly migratory fish stocks. After being successfully pursued in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Canadian initiative is presently underway in the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, which met in March and July of 1993 and will meet again in March and August of 1994 before reporting to the General Assembly later that year.

In the Conference and throughout the process leading up to it Canada has worked closely with a "core group" of coastal States composed of Argentina, Chile, Iceland and New Zealand. At the outset it was apparent that, while some shared Canada's concern with respect straddling stocks, the primary interest of the majority of coastal States related to highly migratory stocks and would also have to be taken into account.

At the second session of the UN Conference last July, Canada and its Core Group allies tabled a Draft Convention on the Conservation of Straddling Stocks on the High Seas and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks on the High Seas. Its main elements deal with conservation and management, surveillance and control, enforcement, regional fisheries organizations and arrangements, and settlement of disputes.

Canada's objectives at the Conference are not fully shared by the major distant water fishing States. For instance, the United States and Russia endorse our views on straddling stocks but want highly migratory stocks to be treated differently. Japan, Korea, China and the European Community continue to stress freedom to fish on the high seas and want to limit the outcome of the Conference to a non-binding General Assembly resolution.