



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 72/24

PREPARING FOR THE THIRD LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE

A Statement in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 30, 1972, by the Canadian Alternate Representative, Mr. J.A. Beesley.

As we meet here for the fifth successive year to take stock of the results of our collective efforts to develop the Law of the Sea along new and progressive lines, one can detect a feeling of regret and disappointment that we have not accomplished more, coupled with a mood of caution and optimism concerning our future work. The time has come for us to decide whether, when and where to commence the Third Law of the Sea Conference. Resolution 2750-C of the twenty-fifth General Assembly requires of us that we make this decision at this time. It is, therefore, important that we be quite clear as to the nature and extent of the work requiring completion before the Law of the Sea Conference can commence with any reasonable assurance of a successful outcome.

As we pointed out in the concluding days of the last session of the Seabed Committee in Geneva last August, it is obvious that the preparatory work of the Seabed Committee has not been completed and that much remains still to be done. We do not, however, share the view expressed by some that it is premature to attempt to decide at this session of the General Assembly on the Third Law of the Sea Conference. As we made clear in Geneva, we share the widely-held view that the preparatory work of the Seabed Committee has progressed to the point where one can foresee with some confidence sufficient further concrete progress from two more sessions of the Seabed Committee to enable us to commence the Conference.

A number of delegations have referred to the importance of the agreement we have reached on the "list of issues". My own delegation attaches considerable significance to this achievement, since we recognize that the negotiations on that question triggered the process of substantive negotiations on the underlying issues. It is true that no single item on the list will attract the same degree of support from all delegations, but it is equally true that no delegation can any longer have justifiable fears that any issue of importance to it will not be considered at the Law of the Sea Conference. We have, therefore, gone from a decision in principle two years ago in favour of a comprehensive approach to the future Law of the Sea to the specific application of that principle to a range of separate but closely interrelated issues. During the negotiating process, we have all become much more keenly aware not only of the nature and extent of the problems facing us