

The Canadian delegation in Geneva last week outlined a process which could be implemented without awaiting the results of the 1973 Conference. This would involve the immediate determination, as of a stated date, of the minimum non-contentious area of the seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction; the simultaneous establishment of an interim international machinery for that area; and the simultaneous creation of an "international development fund" to be derived from voluntary contributions made by the coastal states, on the basis of a fixed percentage of revenues accruing from off-shore exploitation beyond the outer limits of their internal waters. We are looking forward with interest to the reaction to the Canadian suggestion. It will be discussed at the next Preparatory Committee meeting this summer.

Canada has been actively involved in all these efforts to lay down accepted norms in international legal instruments directed towards preserving and promoting the peaceful uses of our environmental heritage, under the rule of law. We shall continue our support for the development and expansion of the areas subject to such rule. For example, we have been pressing for several years for the conclusion of an effective liability convention in respect of objects launched into outer space. The Canadian position on this question has consistently favoured a victim-oriented treaty that will ensure that just and equitable compensation will be paid to states suffering loss due to injurious space activities.

When examining the creation of new international law, we must certainly take note of the recent efforts of the International Civil Aviation Organization. ICAO, with its headquarters here in Montreal, has recently made important strides in its fight to prevent and deter aircraft hijackings and other forms of unlawful interference with air-transport. The kind of international legal framework being developed, including the 1963 Tokyo Convention on crimes on board aircraft, the 1970 Hague Convention on hijacking, and the draft Unlawful Interference Convention (to be the subject of a diplomatic conference this September), will contribute substantially to maintaining and promoting safety in the air. As a major aviation country and as a member of the ICAO Council, Canada has been especially active in the field of international air law, one in which we did a lot of the pioneering work in the Forties and Fifties and to which we continue to attach a very high degree of importance.

There has recently been significant activity in the development of international humanitarian law, which is generally based on the four Geneva Red Cross Conventions of 1949. Since that immediate postwar era, events have shown that the Conventions should be strengthened and extended, to make them more effective in the kinds of conflict that are all prevalent today. In particular, Canada and a number of other countries would like to see the adoption of more comprehensive, internationally-accepted standards of conduct with respect to civilian populations in non-international conflict situations, such as the recent war in Nigeria. At the 1969 International Red Cross Conference in Istanbul, the Canadian delegation presented a number of proposals on the subject which received widespread support. The International Committee of the Red Cross has now convened a meeting of governmental experts on humanitarian law to take place in Geneva at the end of May. Canada will be taking an active part with a view to securing agreement on provisions which could be incorporated in one or more international accords, supplementing and augmenting the 1949 Conventions. The United Nations has also given this matter serious attention and its Secretariat has been working in close collaboration with the Red Cross and interested governments.