

HIGH SEAS FISHING LEGAL INITIATIVE

In the context of its strategy to combat overfishing by foreign vessels just outside its 200 mile zone, Canada has launched a legal initiative in the United Nations. This is a multilateral exercise aimed at developing international law rules, consistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to govern high seas fisheries in a way that will put an end to overfishing.

The initiative originally took the form of what became known as the "Santiago Paper", a document based on the conclusions of a meeting of experts held in St. John's two years ago and developed into a series of principles and measures on high seas fishing by a core group of Chile, New Zealand and Canada in Santiago in May 1991.

At the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in March 1992 in New York, the number of co-sponsors rose to 40. At the UNCED Rio Summit itself, a good part of the substance of the paper was successfully negotiated into the Agenda 21 section on high seas living resources, and heads of state and governments called for a conference under UN auspices to promote effective implementation of the provisions of UNCLOS, related to straddling stocks and highly migratory species.

A resolution is being introduced at the UN General Assembly this fall to convene the Conference in the spring of 1993. Canada will host a meeting of like-minded states in St. John's from January 21-23, 1993 to co-ordinate positions for the Conference.