

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that the Canadian Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Alfred J. Pick, signed, subject to ratification, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft. The Convention has just been adopted by an International Conference on Air Law held in The Hague, December 1-16.

This diplomatic Conference was convened under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization, at the invitation of the Netherlands Government, to consider a draft instrument elaborated by ICAO's Legal Committee. The new anti-hijacking Treaty defines the offence of "unlawful seizure" and requires the contracting states to establish criminal jurisdiction over hijackings occurring on board their registered and leased aircraft; when an aircraft lands in their territory with a hijacker on board; and where, in certain circumstances, a hijacker escapes or otherwise arrives in their territory. By providing that all hijackers must either be extradited to a state wishing to prosecute or must be submitted to prosecution by the authorities of the state where they are, the Convention goes a long way towards ensuring that no hijacker will go unpunished because of legal technicalities.

The Canadian Delegation to The Hague Conference played an active role in promoting a generally acceptable treaty and was particularly instrumental in securing adoption of the strong prosecution provision. (Article Seven).

With all the articles having been approved by an overwhelming majority of 77 national delegations participating in the Conference, the Canadian Government believes that this Convention is capable of attracting support from all members of the international community.

The Unlawful Seizure Convention was also signed today on behalf of a number of other governments which participated in the Conference, and will be opened for signature by all other states in London, Moscow, and Washington after December 31, 1970. It will come into force after ten of the states who participated at The Hague Conference have ratified it.

The Canadian Government will now make a close study of the Convention with a view to ascertaining what national legislation will be required. When the required legislation has been enacted and other steps necessary to permit ratification have been taken, it is expected that Canada will become a party.