

THIRD UNITED NATIONS LAW OF THE  
SEA CONFERENCE

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NINTH SESSION

The United Nations Law of the Sea Conference at its 9th session held in New York, from March 3 to April 4, and in Geneva, from July 28 to August 29, was able to reach agreement on most of the thorny outstanding issues which had been delaying its progress. Although the Conference was not able to take the crucial decision that all negotiations were completed, it produced a second and third revision of the negotiating text, now entitled the Draft Convention on the Law of the Sea (Informal Text). The decision to formalize what (despite its title) remains a negotiating text into a draft convention will now be made at the 10th, and concluding session, in New York March 9 to April 7, 1981. It now seems possible that the Conference will be able to hold its final meeting to adopt the Law of the Sea Convention in Caracas in September, 1981.

The Group of 77 and the industrialized states finally appeared determined to reach agreement, permitting the Conference to resolve questions such as voting in the Council of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), financing the Enterprise, plans of work for seabed mining and, to a large extent, transfer of technology. For Canada the session produced mixed results. While the consensus on the above issues is largely acceptable from a Canadian point of view and the question of the limits on the continental shelf is now resolved in Canada's favour, discussions on the regulation of seabed mineral production were not concluded on a satisfactory basis. Nevertheless, as a result of strong pressures from land-based mineral producing countries, the chairman of the committee dealing with seabed mining has encouraged further discussion on the seabed mineral production formula. The United Nations Secretariat, at the producers' instigation, will prepare a study of the effects of the formula. The issue therefore remains open for discussion at the 10th session.