

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

The Law of the Sea Convention, which was adopted in April 1982, sets out a comprehensive regime for the regulation of the world's oceans. When it closed for signature on December 9, 1984, it had 159 signatories (including Canada), which represents an unprecedented response to any international accord. Among the countries that did not sign the Convention, because of objections to its deep seabed mining regime, were the United States, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Convention will come into force 12 months after the date of deposit of the sixtieth instrument of ratification or accession. As of September 1, 1988, 35 states had ratified the Convention.

During the past year, Canada was an active participant in the work of the Preparatory Commission (PrepCom), established by the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in order to set up the institutional system envisaged in the Convention. The PrepCom met in Kingston, Jamaica, in March-April 1988, and in New York, in August-September 1988, to continue its efforts to develop suitable mechanisms for implementation of the regime outlined in the Convention for the exploitation of deep seabed resources.

Since the decisions in August and December 1987, to register the state mining entities of India, France, Japan and the USSR as the first four "pioneer investors", PrepCom has turned its attention to the obligations of pioneer investors, as set out in Resolution II of UNCLOS and several PrepCom decisions. The first four pioneer investors, while acknowledging their obligations, argue that changed economic circumstances since the adoption of the Convention make adjustments to (or waiver of) some of the pioneer obligations necessary. PrepCom Chairman Jose Jesus has established the "Group of 33", in which all PrepCom interest groups are represented, as a forum for negotiations on pioneer obligations. Some progress was made at the New York session and negotiations will continue at the Seventh Session, to be held in Kingston, Jamaica, from February 27 to March 23, 1989.