

International law developments

The UN Law of the Sea (LOS) Conference marked time during 1981, while the new Administration in the United States reviewed the settlements on continental margins and seabed mining, achieved the previous year. Meanwhile there was some progress on other outstanding issues, particularly the new article on the delimitation of maritime boundaries between states with adjacent or opposite coasts. Delegations agreed to call the negotiating text the Draft convention on the law of the sea. The conference was scheduled to complete its work in the spring of 1982 with the Law of the sea convention open for signature at Caracas in the autumn of 1982.

At Montevideo, Uruguay a late autumn senior level meeting of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) prepared a program for the Development and Periodic Review of Environment Law for use until the end of this decade. It identifies areas and sets out strategies for concentration of efforts by governments and international organizations in the development of environmental law. UNEP's Governing Council was to consider this report for adoption at its tenth session in May 1982.

A bill defining and restricting the immunity of foreign states is in the final stage of adoption by Parliament. The State Immunity Bill (S-19) will bring Canada's practice in line with that of other Western countries, including Britain and the USA. Foreign states will continue to enjoy immunity in principle with certain exceptions, the most important of which is that they will be liable for suit in Canadian courts in respect of commercial activities and judgments against them can henceforth be executed on their property if it is used for commercial purposes.

REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

The United States

Relations between Canada and the United States - close neighbours and each other's largest trading partners - are based on an infinite number of mutual interests, geographical, commercial and personal. This complex and important relationship, which is central to Canada's foreign policy, requires constant, careful attention.

In 1981 as in recent years, energy, investment and environmental issues dominated the scene. There were delays in some areas as the new Reagan Administration took time to reassess its international and bilateral commitments. President Reagan visited Canada twice - an official visit to Ottawa in March and in July for the Economic Summit.

Acid rain continued to be an issue of primary concern to Canada. Canadian and US negotiators met twice to develop a transboundary air pollution agreement. A Memorandum of Intent in August 1980 established work groups of Canadian and US experts to assemble the scientific information which would form the basis of such an agreement and their work continued