



# Statements and Speeches

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No. 75/3

## LAW OF THE SEA

A Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, to the Halifax Board of Trade, Halifax, February 25, 1975.

The people of Canada, and especially we of Nova Scotia, have no difficulty understanding how important the sea is to our very existence. Much of our past is directly linked to the sea; the daily lives of many of us depend on the sea; a good part of our future will come from the sea. That is why the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, deserves our full attention and our best efforts.

The new legal order which is being sought for the oceans of the world will undoubtedly affect Canada in many fundamental respects -- from the points of view of our natural resources, our environment and our national sovereignty. Canada's geography alone, with its thousands of miles of coastline, and islands, its huge continental shelf and northern climate, will cause us to feel the consequences of a new law of the sea perhaps more than anyone else.

I should like, therefore, to tell you how we, in the Canadian Government, see the present situation; how we envisage the development of this new law of the sea; what the prospects for success are, and what the risks of failure are.

There was, as you all know, a first substantive session of the Law of the Sea Conference last summer in Caracas. For ten weeks, 138 sovereign nations -- each with one vote, let me stress -- attempted to draft an all-encompassing convention to regulate all of man's activities in, below, and above the sea -- that is, 70 per cent of the earth's surface. Little wonder that they could not finish their immense task, even though preparations had been going on for six years in the United Nations Seabed Committee. Some observers were quick to conclude that Caracas had been a failure for the simple reason that not a single text was approved. That is, in my view, a simplistic judgment. It ignores the real nature of the conference -- its methods of work, its overall objectives and, in a very real sense, the substantial progress made.

The conference has more than 100 major items and sub-items on its agenda. It must legislate on matters relating to the security and sovereignty of states, fisheries, mineral resources, both

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