

Nonetheless, the U.N. is quietly building up a body of law that will — when the political will develops — be the basis for world institutions with some teeth in them. In fact, under Article 13 of the Charter, one of the General Assembly's functions is "encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification." As of 1982, the United Nations alone, excluding the specialized agencies, had concluded 319 multilateral agreements, including some of fundamental importance.

In the 19th century, multilateral treaties had limited subjects and rarely more than ten parties. Today, a typical U.N. convention has a least fifty parties and some major ones have more than 100. The scope of such treaties now covers practically every important activity: disarmament, human rights, the law of the sea, diplomatic and consular relations, outer space, narcotic drugs, trade and development, commodities, transport and communications. Most of these treaties are not strong enough; nonetheless, in this way international law is moving in large measure from a customary to a codified system.

The U.N. machinery is drawing nations, old and new, into the process of writing laws for the planet. Canada is very much part of this process. For example, a detailed study of international law relating to arms control and outer space was prepared by Canada and recently tabled at the Conference on Disarmament.\* This survey identifies a number of important themes for examination if an international treaty banning all weapons in space is to be successfully written. It also serves as an excellent example of the evolution and contemporary relevance of international law to the disarmament process.

In reflecting the wide basis of law which already exists and now needs to be developed, the study found that:

I General international legal norms regarding military activities on Earth (e.g. the U.N. Charter) also apply to military activities in outer space (Outer Space Treaty and Moon Treaty).

II Outer space and celestial bodies are not subject to national appropriation and are free for non-prohibited uses such as exploration and scientific investigation by all states (Outer Space Treaty and Moon Treaty).

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\**Survey of International Law Relevant to Arms Control and Outer Space*, July 1985.