

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

There is a good deal of activity in the field of international environmental law at the present time. Two important series of negotiations, namely those on climate change and those on the preservation of biological diversity, began this year and must be ended, if possible, before the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development scheduled for Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Discussions are also in progress for the adoption in Rio of an Earth Charter concerning the responsibility of States, and perhaps also of individuals, in matters of environment and development.

Several other series of negotiations are under way. Within the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Canada is involved in the negotiation of a Protocol on Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), which contribute toward atmospheric pollution by the formation of ozone at ground level, a Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, and another Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

In February, Canada ratified the Protocol on Nitrous Oxide Emissions negotiated, as was the Protocol on VOCs, under the auspices of the 1979 ECE Convention on Long-Distance Transboundary Air Pollution.

Also in February, Canada signed in Espoo, Finland, the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context negotiated within the ECE.

In March, Canada and the United States signed a significant Air Quality Agreement that provides a global framework for the management of air pollution between the two countries.

In addition, Canada played an active part in preparing a strategy for environmental protection in the Arctic, signed in Rovaniemi, Finland in June by the environment ministers of the countries with shores on the Arctic ocean. In addition, as a party to the Antarctic Treaty, Canada was involved in negotiating the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, to be signed in Madrid this October.

Finally, Canada was involved in preparing the regulations required to ratify the Basel Convention on The Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and Their Disposal, signed in March 1989 but not yet in effect.