



DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

communiqué

No: 59
No.:

DIFFUSION: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE: JULY 28, 1980

THE CANADIAN DELEGATION AT THE RESUMED NINTH SESSION OF THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark MacGuigan, announced that he will head the Canadian Delegation to the resumed ninth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea which opens today in Geneva and runs until August 29, 1980. Canada's High Commissioner to Australia, J. Alan Beesley, is Vice Chairman of the Delegation.

This resumed session will follow up on the substantial progress achieved at the first part of the session in New York this spring, with the agreed objective of finalizing texts and formulating a draft Convention. The New York meeting was successful in producing a second revision of the Informal Composite Negotiating Text (ICNT/Rev 2), the Conference's main working document, which will be the basis for further negotiation in Geneva. Prospects for the success of the Conference remain good but a number of important issues remain to be resolved, most of them relating to deep seabed mining, including: seabed nickel production regulation, transfer of technology, the composition of the Council of the International Seabed Authority and its decision making mechanisms, and the financing and statute of the Enterprise (the international seabed mining company). While the question of a formula to determine the limits of the continental shelf appears to have been satisfactorily resolved in New York, new concerns have arisen about the coastal state's rights in respect of marine scientific research on the continental margin beyond 200 miles and the terms of reference of an international commission on the limits of the continental shelf. Canada will ask the

Conference to also examine the problem of conservation of fish stocks straddling the 200-mile limit of exclusive fishing or economic zones. The drafting committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Beesley, will continue the Conference task of putting this complicated negotiating text into treaty form.

The draft negotiating text already represents a major step forward in restructuring the principles of the Law of the Sea and in developing new concepts of ocean resource management. For example, the 200-mile fishing zone, which is now an established principle of international law, has already contributed to the remarkable resurgence of the fisheries industry in the Atlantic Provinces. The 12-mile territorial sea, which Canada proclaimed in 1970, is now also an accepted legal norm. The Conference has also recognized coastal state sovereign rights over the continental margin which would give Canada an extensive shelf beyond the 200-mile fishing zone on the East Coast. Of particular importance to Canada as well, the Conference has produced a comprehensive system of legal rules for the protection of the marine environment, including an enhanced role for the coastal states in the prevention and control of vessel source pollution, as well as special provisions for the protection of fragile ecosystems in ice-covered waters.

Facing on three oceans, with a broad continental shelf, a major fishing industry, an important land-based mineral industry, and an ecologically vulnerable Arctic, Canada has a vital interest in the outcome of the Law of the Sea Conference.