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SIGNING CEREMONY FOR NEW CONVENTION ON NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Canada today joined eight other signatories in a new Convention on Future Multilateral Co-operation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries.

The signing ceremony in Ottawa marks the start of a process which will eventually result in the creation of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to replace the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF). The new Convention will establish a framework for international co-operation which complements the changes in fisheries management brought about by extensions of national fisheries jurisdiction.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Don Jamieson, and the Honourable Roméo LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, represented Canada at the ceremony. Mr. Jamieson signed the Convention on behalf of the Government of Canada.

"The conservation and management of fish stocks which migrate within and beyond the limits of Canadian jurisdiction are of concern to Canada," Mr. Jamieson said. "It is obvious that we cannot afford to ignore the interaction of Canadian management measures within our limits with those taken internationally on the high seas."

"For this reason, we are firmly committed...to multilateral co-operation and co-ordination in the field, and are pleased that Canadian proposals to this effect have been found generally acceptable by other participating governments," Mr. Jamieson added.

Mr. LeBlanc hailed the new Convention as a significant international achievement, offering proof of the continuation of good will between the coastal states of the Northwest Atlantic and those other states that fish in the area.

The Convention requires that Canadian fishermen be given special consideration in the allocation of fish stocks on the Grand Banks beyond 200 miles, and Flemish Cap. This recognizes the extensive efforts Canada has undertaken over the years with respect to surveillance and inspection in these areas and the dependency of Canadian coastal communities on these stocks.

The new Convention will provide for the management and control of fisheries in areas of the Northwest Atlantic beyond national jurisdiction. It will continue the ICNAF scheme of joint international enforcement, to ensure that all agreed measures are effectively carried out by the vessels of the contracting parties.

Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands), the European Economic Community (on behalf of its nine members), the German Democratic Republic, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics signed the Convention at the ceremony. Other prospective signatories who attended the diplomatic conference held in Ottawa a year ago are expected to sign before December 31, 1978.

The proposed organization could come into being as soon as January 1, 1979, in accordance with the provisions of the new Convention if six signatories deposit their instruments of ratification by the end of this year.