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LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, will be heading the Canadian delegation to the second session of the Law of the Sea Conference which is to take place in Caracas from June 20 to August 29, 1974. The Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Jack Davis, and the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, the Honourable Donald Jamieson, will be alternate heads. The Canadian delegation will also comprise officials of the Departments of External Affairs; Energy, Mines and Resources; Environment; Indian and Northern Affairs; Justice; National Defence; the Ministry of State for Science and Technology; and the Ministry of Transport. In addition, the delegation will include officials of the provinces and the fisheries, oil, mineral and shipping industries and the fishermen's unions.

The Law of the Sea Conference held a first session in New York from December 3 to 14, 1973, in order to settle a number of organizational and procedural questions: election of the President and the other members of the Bureau; setting-up of committees of the whole and of a drafting committee; and adoption of the rules of procedure. It was in the course of this session that the Canadian representative, Ambassador J. A. Beesley, was elected to fill the important post of chairman of the drafting committee.

During the first week of the Caracas session, the Conference will conclude its examination of the rules of procedure, which it began but did not complete at its December meeting. Then the Conference will take up the many substantive issues in its three committees of the whole. A first committee will devise a legal regime for the international seabed area and will determine the powers and functions of the International Seabed Authority. The second committee will concentrate on the more traditional issues of the Law of the Sea, such as the territorial sea, the continental shelf, high seas, fisheries, archipelagoes, international straits and islands. The subject of scientific research on the oceans and preservation of the marine environment will be taken up in the third committee.

If the delegates are unable to conclude a comprehensive and viable agreement on the Law of the Sea by the end of the Caracas session, the Conference will meet again at a further session in 1975.