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CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE EIGHTH SESSION
OF THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE
GENEVA, MARCH 19 TO APRIL 27, 1979

Secretary of State for External Affairs Don Jamieson announced today that he, together with Marc Lalonde, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and Roméo LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, will head the Canadian Delegation to the eighth session of the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference which is to take place in Geneva from March 19 to April 27, 1979. J. Alan Beesley, Canada's High Commissioner to Australia, will be Deputy Head of the Delegation.

The eighth session of the Law of the Sea Conference will focus on the major unresolved issues related to the establishment of an international system for the exploitation of the resources of the deep seabed and the definition of the outer edge of the continental margin. The important deep seabed questions still to be resolved include the system of exploitation, the financial terms of contracts, transfer of technology, the review process and the powers, composition and decision making process of the Council of the proposed International Seabed Authority. Discussion will also continue on delimitation of maritime boundaries between adjacent or opposite states, marine scientific research, rights of land locked and geographically disadvantaged states and settlement of disputes.

The Conference has to its credit an impressive record of achievement in restructuring traditional principles of law of the sea and in developing new concepts of ocean resource management. There is now general agreement in favour of the principle of the common heritage of mankind, the 200-mile exclusive economic zone, the archipelagic concept and freedom of transit through straits used for international navigation.

The Conference has already left an indelible imprint on state practice. For Canada, the Conference has provided multilateral endorsement of the 200-mile fishing zone and the 12-mile territorial sea and contributed to increased international acceptance of enhanced coastal state jurisdiction over pollution from ships, particularly in ice-covered Arctic waters. The resurgence of the fishing industry in the Maritime Provinces offers dramatic evidence of the positive impact which the Conference has had upon Canada.

Facing on three oceans with a vast continental shelf, a major fisheries industry, ecologically vulnerable frozen terrain and a dependence on international shipping to take its goods to the world, Canada has a crucial stake in the outcome of the Law of the Sea Conference. The Canadian Delegation will continue to work towards an early conclusion to the Law of the Sea Conference and the adoption of a new comprehensive treaty essential to Canada's vital interests, as well as to global peace and security.