



DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

# communiqué

No: 42  
No.:

DIFFUSION: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
RELEASE: MAY 19, 1977

CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE SIXTH SESSION  
OF THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE,  
NEW YORK, MAY 23 TO JULY 15, 1977

---

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Don Jamieson, announced that he, together with the Honourable Ronald Basford, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the Honourable Roméo LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries and the Environment, will head the Canadian Delegation to the sixth session of the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference which is to take place in New York from May 23 to July 8 or 15, 1977. Mr. J. Alan Beesley, Assistant Under-Secretary of State and Legal Adviser, Department of External Affairs, will be Deputy Head of the Delegation.

The sixth session of the Law of the Sea Conference will mark a critical phase in these long and difficult negotiations. Although the last session ended in an impasse on the issue of the rights to explore and exploit the deep seabed resources beyond national jurisdiction, significant progress has been achieved on most of the other key issues, including: general agreement in favour of the principle of the common heritage of mankind in respect of deep seabed resources; a 12 mile territorial sea; the concept of the 200 mile economic zone, including coastal state sovereign rights over living and non-living resources and jurisdiction in respect of the prevention and control of marine pollution. Canada's action, along with that of many other countries, to extend its fisheries zone to 200 miles was based on the emerging consensus at the Conference on the 200 mile economic zone.

However, this significant progress, which has already contributed to a radical revision of the law of the sea through state practice, must still be translated into an actual convention

commanding universal support. Before a convention can be adopted, the Conference has still to resolve the outstanding and most difficult issues, in particular the regime applicable to the deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction. There are still differences of view on the question of access to the deep seabed mineral resources by private and state entities on the one hand and the International Enterprise on the other hand. Intersessional discussions produced, for the first time, a constructive dialogue on this issue which gives solid ground for believing that an accommodation between opposing views will be realized at the next session. Nevertheless, exacting negotiations lie ahead on this and related issues as well as on such other questions as marine scientific research in the economic zone, coastal state powers to protect the marine environment, the rights of landlocked and geographically disadvantaged states and settlement of disputes.

In light of the substantial progress already achieved and without minimizing the difficult issues still to be resolved, Canada remains firmly committed to the realization of a new comprehensive law of the sea convention and the Canadian Delegation will be working actively to that end at the forthcoming session.