

# LAW OF THE SEA

## New Hopes

The most protracted and often the most difficult of all international conferences are those that try to extend the rule of international law; and among conferences at which legal problems are the issue, those that write new law are more troublesome than those that merely codify accepted practices. In this sense the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea has been regarded as the world's most ambitious undertaking to establish legal codes or rules where old ones are no longer wholly useful, or where none existed before.

As the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea enters its Fourth Session since it began in 1973, the outlook for agreement—and for a major enlargement of the rule of law in international life—is better than it has been for years.

More than 150 nations, the largest number ever assembled, are meeting in New York from 15th March to 7th May. They have before them for the first time an informal model text covering every item with which the Conference must deal. It was produced after long and difficult negotiations by the Chairmen of the Conference's three main Committees at the end of the third session in Geneva. This single text contains 324 draft articles dealing with such major issues as:

- \* The basic conditions of exploration and exploitation of the international area;
- \* Establishment of an international seabed authority;
- \* Territorial sea and contiguous zone;
- \* Straits used for international navigation;
- \* Exclusive economic zone;
- \* Continental shelf;
- \* High seas;
- \* Rules pertaining to landlocked states;
- \* Archipelagos;
- \* Regime of islands;
- \* Enclosed and semi-enclosed seas;
- \* Rules applicable to territories under foreign occupation or colonial domination;
- \* Protection and preservation of the marine environment;
- \* Marine scientific research;
- \* Development and transfer of technology

The treaty, when it is finally concluded, will be signed in Caracas, Venezuela. The hope is for substantial agreement at this session, but just in case it still eludes them, the delegates have left open the possibility of having one more session in 1976.