



## The United Nations Law of the Sea Treaty Information Center

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### The Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST) - Background

*Read the complete Law of the Sea Treaty [here](#).*

The Law of the Sea Treaty, formally known as the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS III, was adopted in 1982. Its purpose is to establish a comprehensive set of rules governing the oceans and to replace previous U.N. Conventions on the Law of the Sea, one in 1958 (UNCLOS I) and another in 1960 (UNCLOS II), that were believed to be inadequate.

Negotiated in the 1970s, the treaty was heavily influenced by the "New International Economic Order," a set of economic principles first formally advanced at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). That agenda called for "fairer" terms of trade and development financing for the so-called under-developed and developing nations.

Another way the New International Economic Order has been described is "redistributionist."

The Law of the Sea Treaty calls for technology transfers and wealth transfers from developed to undeveloped nations. It also requires parties to the treaty to adopt regulations and laws to control pollution of the marine environment. Such provisions were among the reasons President Ronald Reagan rejected the treaty in 1982. As Edwin Meese, U.S. Attorney General under President Reagan, explained recently, "...it was out of step with the concepts of economic liberty and free enterprise that Ronald Reagan was to inspire throughout the world."

In addition to the economic provisions, the treaty also establishes specific jurisdictional limits on the ocean area that countries may claim, including a 12-mile territorial sea limit and a 200-mile exclusive economic zone limit.

Some proponents of the treaty believe that the treaty will establish a system of property rights for mineral extraction in deep sea beds, making the investment in such ventures more attractive.

Notwithstanding concerns raised about the Law of the Sea Treaty - and there have been many - the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended U.S. accession to the treaty in a unanimous vote in March 2004.

More than three years later, a vote of the entire U.S. Senate has yet to be scheduled.

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501 Capitol Court, NE Washington DC 20002  
(202) 543-4110 • [www.nationalcenter.org](http://www.nationalcenter.org) • [info@nationalcenter.org](mailto:info@nationalcenter.org)  
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