



# **The Law of the Sea**

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**Maritime Boundary Agreements  
(1970-1984)**



**Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea  
United Nations**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea is currently engaged in preparing publications dealing with the practice of States in relation to subject-matters covered by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea adopted in 1982. It is essential, especially at a time when the Convention has not yet entered into force (as of 30 September 1987, there were 34 ratifications), to observe such a practice and gather all information in relation to it, particularly in the field of national legislation or bilateral agreements.

The delimitation of maritime boundaries, although not a new phenomenon, has certainly become an important element of the practice of States in the modern law of the sea. During the last ten years numerous agreements have been adopted, and it is estimated that over one hundred boundary-delimitation issues around the world await some form of resolution.

The reason for such an increase in pending boundary-delimitation issues is to be found in the provisions of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the extension of zones under national jurisdiction, namely the right to establish the breadth of the territorial sea up to 12 miles (art. 3), the adoption of the concept of an exclusive economic zone which may extend up to 200 miles (art. 57) and the definition of the continental shelf which may, in some cases, extend up to 350 miles or 100 miles from the 2,500 metre isobath (art. 76).

The coastal State will enjoy a variety of sovereign rights and jurisdiction over these areas which translate into important economic and political interests.

The adoption of new limits for areas under national jurisdiction, which in some cases may have created overlapping claims, has forced States to seek agreement with their neighbours with a view to establishing precise boundaries and to define clearly the zones in which they are entitled to exercise their sovereignty in the case of the territorial sea or their sovereign rights or jurisdiction in the case of the continental shelf or the exclusive economic zone.

In the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, the applicable provisions are contained in articles 15, 74 and 83 dealing respectively with the delimitation of the territorial sea between States with opposite or adjacent coasts, the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone and the delimitation of the continental shelf.



















































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































