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THE PRIME MINISTER

1 March 1982

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T 34/82

Dear Ron.

Thank you for your message about the Draft Convention on the Law of the Sea.

When we came to office, we also conducted a review of the Convention. Our conclusion was that the adoption of a generally acceptable Convention by agreement would be in the United Kingdom's interest, subject to further consideration of the final text.

Since the talks which our delegations had in Washington on 8/9 February, we have approached some influential Governments and key leaders in the Conference and urged them to accept the necessity for further negotiations on the questions which you raised in your statement of 29 January. We have also spoken with Ambassador Koh, who will be doing his utmost to establish a mechanism for such negotiations. And we persuaded the EC Council of Ministers to adopt a decision on 22 February urging that the matters which you raised should be considered by the Conference.

We have not yet decided how the United Kingdom would react if it proved impossible to achieve a generally acceptable Convention and the group of 77 pressed for a vote. Our objective is an acceptable Convention and we would consider any arrangement which excluded the United States as seriously defective. We shall be making clear to the leaders of the Conference that we would have great difficulty in participating in a Convention in which the US did not take part. All parties have recognised that the Law of the Sea negotiations are a package; we shall therefore need to study the final text especially carefully before reaching a decision on the balance of advantage in the light of our national interest.

/ I was glad

I was glad to note in your statement on 29 January that the US delegation at the Conference will be working with other countries to achieve an acceptable treaty. This commitment has already proved helpful. It will be necessary to convince leading delegations at the Conference of the seriousness of the US commitment to the multilateral treaty process. This leads us to wonder whether it is wise to sign, in the next week, the reciprocating states agreement related to our national mining legislation. We want to sign this agreement with you and the FRG. But signature in the week before the resumption of the Conference will make it more difficult to get the necessary delegations to negotiate on your concerns and so to obtain a generally acceptable international regime of the kind we both want.

Our delegation will, as usual, be working closely with yours to try and achieve a Convention which is in our common interests.

Yours sincerely  
V. Rayner

The President of the United States of America