

INTRODUCTION

This volume, prepared by the Division for the Development and Codification of International Law of the Legal Department of the Secretariat of the United Nations, inaugurates the *United Nations Legislative Series*, a systematic collection of those national legislative texts which deal with matters of international concern and constitute evidence of the practice of States in the field of international law. The purpose of this series is to fill a gap in international documentation by gathering together materials which are at present widely scattered and often difficult of access. The preparation of such a collection has been advocated by many official and unofficial bodies, and was recommended recently by the International Law Commission in its report of 29 July 1950 (*General Assembly, Official Records: Fifth Session, Supplement No. 12*, p. 10).

The content of this volume concerns the régime of the high seas, one of the three topics selected by the International Law Commission for early codification. In view of the diversity and vastness of national legislation in this field, it proved necessary to limit this volume to laws and regulations relating to three subjects of special importance: continental shelf, contiguous zones, and supervision of foreign vessels on the high seas under special treaty provisions. It is hoped that this volume will be followed by other volumes on the régime of the high seas and on subjects in other fields of international law.

In collecting the materials for this volume, a broad definition of the term "legislation" has been adopted. In the collection, not only laws and legislative decrees but also regulations, orders, declarations and proclamations of general importance have been included. In addition, relevant international agreements have been included, together with national laws issued for their execution. Editorial notes provide supplementary information about prior laws and subsequent developments. Additional instruments, received by the Secretariat after the completion of the manuscript, have been placed in the Annex to this volume.