The fourth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea was held from 15 March to 7 May 1976 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The first session of the Conference, held in New York from 3 to 15 December 1973, had been devoted primarily to organizational and procedural matters. The second session, held at Caracas, Venezuela, from 20 June to 29 August 1974, had begun substantive work on the questions of ocean law before the Conference. At the third session, held at Geneva, Switzerland, from 17 March to 9 May 1975, each of the Chairmen of the three main committees prepared a single negotiating text for a proposed Convention on the Law of the Sea which was issued on 7 May 1975 and presented to the Conference on the final day of the session. After the third session, the President circulated a fourth part of the single negotiating text on settlement of disputes.

A total of 149 States participated in the fourth session. In addition, two territories that had not gained independence, 11 specialized agencies or United Nations bodies, nine intergovernmental organizations, 33 non-governmental organizations having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and three national liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) or the League of Arab States participated as observers.

The 149 States which participated were Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi, the Byelorussian SSR, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, the Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Kampuchea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, the Gambia, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, the Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Republic, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nauru, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, the Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Surinam, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the Ukrainian SSR, the USSR, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Cameroon, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States, the Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Western Samoa, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire and Zambia.

The two territories which sent observers, in accordance with invitations issued as a result of a General Assembly decision of 17 December 1974, were the Netherlands Antilles and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The specialized agencies and United Nations bodies which were represented at the fourth session were the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Council for Namibia.

4 See Y.U.N., 1974, p. 85, text of resolution 3334(XXIX).