

**Federal Law No. 19 of 1993 regarding the Delimitation of Maritime Zones  
of the United Arab Emirates, 17 October 1993**

We, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayyan, the President of the United Arab Emirates,

Having perused:

The Interim Constitution.

Federal Law No. 1 of 1972 in respect of the Terms of Reference of the

Ministries and Ministers and its Amendments.

Federal Law No. 45 of 1992 in respect of the Organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

And acting upon the submission presented by the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs and

approved by the Council of Ministers and sanctioned by the Federal Supreme Council,

Hereby promulgate the following Law:

**DEFINITIONS**

**Article 1**

In the implementation of this Law, unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and terms shall have the meanings hereunder assigned to them:

"**the State**" the United Arab Emirates;

"**baseline**" the line from which the territorial sea shall be measured;

"**island**" a natural formation of land surrounded by water and emerging above water at high tide";

"**group of islands**" a formation of two or more islands constituting with their interconnecting waters an interrelated geographical and economic entity;

"**low-tide elevation**" a naturally formed area of land which is surrounded by and above water at low tide but submerged at high tide;

"**bay**" a well-marked indentation whose penetration is in such proportion to the width of its mouth as to contain land-locked waters and constitute more than a mere curvature of the coast;

"**coast**" means the coast of the Arabian Gulf and that of the Gulf of Oman;

"**nautical mile**" one thousand eight hundred and fifty two metres.

CHAPTER ONE  
INTERNAL WATERS

Article 2

The internal waters are the waters on the landward side of the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea of the State is measured. The internal waters of the State specifically include:

1. The waters of bays located along the entire length of the coast;
2. The waters of any low-tide elevation lying at a distance not exceeding 12 nautical miles from the mainland or from any island belonging to the State;
3. The waters between the mainland of the State and any island belonging thereto whose distance from the mainland does not exceed 12 nautical miles;
4. The waters between the islands belonging to the State, the distance between each of which does not exceed 12 nautical miles.

Article 3

The State shall determine the conditions for entry into its internal waters and shall enforce these conditions against any ship wishing to enter.

CHAPTER TWO  
TERRITORIAL SEA

Article 4

The State's sovereignty extends beyond its land territory and its internal waters to its territorial sea, as well as the air space above this sea and its bed and subsoil. The State exercises its sovereignty over the territorial sea in accordance with the provisions of this law and the rules of international law.

The territorial sea of the State means the belt of sea waters beyond its land territory and its internal waters, and adjacent to its coasts. It extends towards the sea with a breadth of (12) twelve nautical miles from the base line.

Article 5

1. Foreign commercial ships shall enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea of the State in accordance with the rules of this right recognized by international law.
2. Entry and passage of foreign warships including submarines and other underwater vehicles through the territorial sea shall be subject to prior permission from the competent authorities in the State.
3. Submarines and other underwater vehicles shall navigate on the surface and show their flag during their passage through the territorial sea of the State.
4. Foreign nuclear-powered ships and ships carrying nuclear substances or radioactive products or other

inherently dangerous or noxious substances shall notify in advance the competent authorities in the State of their entry and passage through the territorial sea.

#### Article 6

The territorial sea of the State shall be measured in accordance with the following provisions:

1. The low-water mark where the coast of the mainland or a shore is exposed to the open sea. In localities where the coastline is deeply indented or cut into there shall be applied the method of straight baselines joining appropriate points to be determined by the competent authorities in the State.
2. Straight lines not exceeding 24 nautical miles in length joining the low-water marks of the entrance of bays. If the width of the entrance of the bay exceeds this distance, the straight line shall be drawn within the bay between any two low-water marks being the closest to its entrance provided that the distance between them does not exceed 24 nautical miles.
3. In the case of a group of islands it shall be measured from straight lines joining the outer points of the outermost islands forming the group.
4. In the case of a port or harbour it shall be measured from lines drawn adjacent to the seaward side of the outermost port or harbour installations and lines drawn between the outer points of such installations provided that such works are an integral part of the port or harbour system.
5. Where the low-tide elevation is wholly or partly situated at a distance from the mainland or from any island not exceeding the width of the territorial sea, such low-tide elevation may be used as a baseline for measuring the breadth of the territorial sea.

#### Article 7

If the measurement of the territorial sea in accordance with the provisions of this Law leaves an area of the exclusive economic zone wholly surrounded by the territorial sea and extending not more than 12 nautical miles in any direction, such area shall form part of the territorial sea of the State. The same rule shall apply to any area of the exclusive economic zone which may be enclosed by drawing a single straight line not more than 12 nautical miles long.

#### Article 8

The outer limit of the territorial sea is the line every point of which is at a distance from the nearest point of the baseline equal to the breadth of the territorial sea.

#### Article 9

The right of fishing in the territorial sea of the State shall be confined to its nationals.

#### Article 10

The State shall, in the zone contiguous to its territorial sea, exercise supervision and control for the following purposes:

1. To prevent infringement of its security, customs, fiscal, sanitary or immigration laws within its land territory, internal waters or territorial sea;

2. To punish infringement of the laws referred to in paragraph 1 of this article if committed within the land territory of the State, its internal waters or territorial sea.

#### Article 11

The breadth of the contiguous zone referred to in article 10 above shall be 12 nautical miles measured from the outer limits of the territorial sea of the State.

### CHAPTER THREE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE

#### Article 12

Subject to the provisions of articles 23/2 and 24 of this Law, the State shall have an exclusive economic zone beyond and adjacent to its territorial sea and extending seawards to a distance not exceeding 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

#### Article 13

The State shall have in the exclusive economic zone sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploration and exploitation of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds.

#### Article 14

The State shall have in the exclusive economic zone jurisdiction with regard to the following:

1. The establishment and use of artificial islands, installations and structures;
2. Marine scientific research;
3. The protection and preservation of the marine environment.

#### Article 15

Fishing rights in the exclusive economic zone shall be confined to the nationals of the State. The competent authorities in the State may, nevertheless, in accordance with the conditions and restrictions laid down, permit non-nationals to fish in this zone taking into account the measures regarding the conservation of living resources.

#### Article 16

The State may, in the exercise of its sovereign rights to explore, exploit, conserve and manage the living resources in the exclusive economic zone, take such measures, including boarding, inspection, arrest and judicial proceedings against vessels, as may be necessary to ensure compliance with its laws and regulations. Arrested vessels and their crews shall not be released until after the posting of bond or security. In cases of arrest of foreign vessels, the flag State shall be notified of the action taken.

## CHAPTER FOUR CONTINENTAL SHELF

### Article 17

Subject to articles 23/2 and 24 of this Law, the continental shelf of the State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas extending beyond its territorial sea and considered a natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.

### Article 18

The State shall exercise over its continental shelf sovereign rights for the purposes of exploring and exploiting its natural resources. These rights shall be exclusive rights shall be exclusive to the State in the sense that no one shall exercise them without its express consent. These rights do not depend on occupation, effective or notional, or on any express proclamation.

The natural resources referred to in the preceding paragraph consist of the mineral and other non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil together with the living organisms belonging to sedentary species, meaning the organisms which, at the harvestable stage, either are immobile on or under the seabed or are unable to move except in constant physical contact with the seabed or the subsoil.

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

### Article 19

The provisions of this Law pertaining to the delimitation of the maritime zones of the mainland shall be applicable to the delimitation of the maritime zones of islands belonging to the State.

### Article 20

1. In the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf, the State shall have the exclusive right to construct, operate and use:

- (a) Artificial islands;
- (b) Installations and structures for the purposes of scientific research, preservation of the environment or other economic purposes;
- (c) Installations and structures which enable the State to exercise its rights.

2. The State shall have exclusive jurisdiction over such artificial islands, installations and structures including jurisdiction with regard to customs, fiscal, health, safety and immigration laws and regulations.

### Article 21

The State may, where necessary, establish safety zones around the artificial islands, installations and structures

in which it may take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the artificial islands, installation and structures. The State shall determine the breadth of the safety zones taking into account applicable international standards. The safety zones shall be designed to ensure that they are reasonably related to the nature and function of the artificial islands, installations and structures and shall not exceed a distance of 500 metres around them, measured from each point of their outer edge, except where excess is authorized by generally accepted international standards.

#### Article 22

The competent authorities in the State shall issue rules in respect of the following matters:

1. The construction, erection or operation of installations or equipment or artificial islands in or on the continental shelf or exclusive economic zone with the aim of exploring or exploiting their natural resources provided that these installations or equipment should not be erected in locations which would hamper access to the mainland or interfere with international navigation;
2. The establishment of the safety zones referred to in article 21 of this Law;
3. The instructions to be observed for the protection of the installations and equipment;
4. The regulation or prevention of entry of vessels into the safety zones;
5. The instructions to be followed for the purpose of protecting the living and non-living resources of the economic zone and the continental shelf;
6. The environment, scientific research and transfer of technology;
7. Any other similar matters.

#### Article 23

1. Where the territorial sea of the State is opposite or adjacent to the territorial sea of another State, the outer limit of the territorial sea of the State shall be the median line.
2. In the absence of an agreement between the State and another opposite or adjacent State, the outer limit of the contiguous zone and the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone shall be the median line every point of which is equidistant from the nearest points on the baselines.

#### Article 24

The State shall publish official charts to show accurately the outer limits of the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf.

#### Article 25

(a) The implementation of this Law shall not affect the validity of contracts and concessions concluded prior to its promulgation for the exploration and exploitation of the living and non-living resources in the maritime zones. It shall also not affect the constitutional rights and other rights acquired by the Emirates as a result of the exploitation of the living and non-living resources in their maritime zones or the rights which may be acquired by virtue of any agreements or contracts to be concluded between them regarding these zones.

(b) The implementation of this Law shall not affect the validity of agreements concluded between the Emirates prior to its promulgation. The Emirates shall also have the right to enter into agreements regulating

maritime boundaries between them.

#### Article 26

Subject to the principles and rules of international law and without prejudice to the imposition of severer penalties provided for by any other law or to a claim for damages:

1. Any violation of the provisions of article 5 of this Law shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term of not less than three years and not exceeding seven years and a fine of not less than dirhams 100,000.00 (DIRHAMS ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND) and not exceeding dirhams 2,000,000.00 (DIRHAMS TWO MILLION) or either of these penalties;
2. Any violation of the provisions of articles 13, 14, 18 and 20 of this Law shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term of not less than three years and not exceeding five years and a fine of not less than dirhams 50,000.00 (DIRHAMS FIFTY THOUSAND) and not exceeding dirhams 1,000,000.00 (DIRHAMS ONE MILLION) or either of these penalties;
3. Any violation of the provisions of articles 9 and 15 of this Law shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term of not less than one year and not exceeding three years and a fine of not less than dirhams 25,000.00 (DIRHAMS TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND) and not exceeding dirhams 1,000,000.00 (DIRHAMS ONE MILLION) or either of these penalties.

#### Article 27

This Law shall be published in the official Gazette and shall enter into force from the date of publication.