

Iceland's comments
on the topic *Sea-level Rise and its Impacts*
at the twenty-first meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal
Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

Iceland, as an island state in the North Atlantic which is highly dependent on the sustainable use of marine resources, has vested interest in the ocean being healthy and efficiently managed.

This was the main reason for Iceland, among other coastal States, to take the lead in the negotiations on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. UNCLOS is the international legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas and its creation solved many longstanding disputes. Iceland holds it in highest regard.

In recent times we have seen development which is posing new threats to the ocean. Climate change is making noticeable impact in Iceland, like so many other countries. We are witnessing changes in temperature, retreating glaciers, variations in migratory patterns of fish stocks and steadily rising sea levels. International cooperation is needed to deal with this development and at the same time, each and every country will have to do its part in the domestic context, especially with focus on adaptation measures

Iceland is doing its share, among other things, by honouring its commitments under the Paris Agreement. We are taking active part in international and regional efforts in this field and delivering on our

national commitments to combat climate change. Iceland has recently reported its new target of 55% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2040.

Despite national and international efforts to combat climate change, predictions are for a considerable global sea level rise in the next decades. This will have drastic effects on maritime and coastal areas and pose a threat to the very existence of vulnerable island states, in a not too distant future. And it poses a challenge to the current regime of the Law of the Sea.

Iceland is pleased with the extensive ongoing international cooperation on the legal issues related to sea-level rise. However, we harbour mixed feelings about some possible legal solutions that are being discussed. While we wholeheartedly support finding a solution to meet the needs of states whose existence is threatened by sea level rise, we are very hesitant about any deviation or novel interpretation of the provisions of UNCLOS.

Iceland welcomes the rich academic as well as empirical discussions here in the UN Open-ended informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. We are convinced that such cooperation is an important step towards finding a timely solution on how to deal with the effects of sea level rise.