

**Statement by the Republic of Turkey  
at the Twenty-First Meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal  
Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

**14 June 2021**

Distinguished co-chairs,

Esteemed participants,

We are pleased to take part in the twenty-first meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. We thank the co-chairs for their efforts in ensuring that we can proceed with this meeting despite the continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and address the important topic of “Sea level rise and its impacts”, the selection of which was supported by Turkey along with other delegations.

Climate change is affecting every country and every corner of the world without exception. However, it poses an existential threat for some countries because of the rising of sea levels.

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) clearly indicates the critical stage which we are at due to sea level rise. The Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019) states that global mean sea level will most likely rise between 0.29 and 1.1 meters by the end of this century.

Rising sea levels, coastal erosion and shoreline retreat, caused by climate change, derail the efforts of governments to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG 6 (water and sanitation), SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production). Sea level rise will also have a direct impact on critical agricultural infrastructure, disrupting efforts to achieve food security and exacerbating the vulnerabilities of developing countries, in particular Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Such climate-induced disasters will hamper the work to ensure and increase access to safe and affordable drinking water. Furthermore, studies show that hundreds of millions of people in developing countries face the risk of being displaced by sea level rise and related socio-economic consequences.

Sea level rise constitutes one of the most pressing issues of our times that will affect many States, especially small island States and States with low-lying coastal areas. These States are facing huge challenges and there is an urgent need for enhanced momentum in capacity building activities and technology transfer which should be integrated with the post-pandemic economic recovery plans.

Turkey also has many coastal areas with low altitude, and a large number of cities and industrial regions that are threatened by the coastal erosion caused by tempests due to the rise of the sea level.

We believe that reducing the vulnerabilities of coastal communities will strengthen their ability to adapt to a range of stresses, including extreme weather events and natural disasters. With this understanding, we consistently underline the importance of adaptation and resilience strategies, as well as the allocation of adequate financial and technical support. The international community should also give more consideration to the implications of sea level rise for infrastructure planning in developing countries.

The oceans constitute one of the fundamental elements of the entire ecosystem. This is why we need to continue to strongly support the efforts to achieve long term conservation, management, and sustainable use of marine living resources and coastal habitats.

In this context, we trust that the second United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (the Ocean Conference), envisaged to take place next year, will highlight the urgent need to increase the resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems and vulnerable communities. We look forward to this important conference, just as we welcome the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which commenced at the beginning of this year as well as the Second World Ocean Assessment (WOA II) launched this April.

Apart from its economic, social and environmental aspects, the international law dimension of sea level rise is also highly pertinent. In this regard, we are pleased that this ICP meeting will provide an opportunity for Member States to learn about the most recent work carried out by the Study Group established by the International Law Commission on the topic “Sea-level rise in relation to international law”.

Finally, we would like to express our continued support for the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which aims to promote international coordination and cooperation in an inclusive manner, and wish all participants a fruitful discussion.

Thank you.