



**New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Te Aka Aorere**

**United Nations General Assembly: Sixth Committee
Seventy-eighth session – Report of the International Law
Commission on the work of its seventy-third and seventy-
fourth sessions**

**National Statement delivered by
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Thank you Chair.

New Zealand thanks the International Law Commission for its report on the work of the seventy-fourth session. We would like to register our deep appreciation for the Commission's ongoing contributions to the progressive development and codification of international law and the Secretariat for supporting this important work.

In this regard, we especially welcome Chapter Eight of the Commission's Report on sea-level rise in relation to international law. This is a global issue of significant importance to the international community, particularly regarding the projected impacts of rising sea levels on low-lying islands and coastal communities.

We support in full the statement made on behalf of Pacific Islands Forum members. Like many other maritime States, New Zealand and our Pacific Island neighbours depend on maritime zones and related resource rights for their livelihoods, economies, identities and ways of life.

We commend the Study Group and its Co-Chairs for their invaluable and timely work to date on this topic, most recently for their additional issues paper analysing the impact of sea-level rise on maritime zones. We welcome the approach the Commission has taken to examining this issue and commend the careful analysis of the Study Group.

We wish to emphasize three observations of the Study Group.

First, we welcome the Study Group's observation that legal stability and equity should be the guiding principles of its work on the legal consequences of sea-level rise given their central importance in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Second, we agree with the Group's observation that preserving baselines and maritime entitlements would give expression to these foundational principles of legal stability and equity.

Finally, we welcome the Co-chairs' observation that the outcome of the Commission's work on this topic should guarantee the sovereign rights of States over their maritime spaces. States' sovereign rights over the natural resources in their maritime zones are central to the delicate balance of rights and obligations contained in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and are of particular significance to the Pacific.

New Zealand wishes to highlight the approach taken by our region with the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise, which sets out our region's collective position on how the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea applies to climate-change related sea-level rise. That Declaration states our region's intention to maintain our maritime zones without reduction notwithstanding physical changes to our coastlines caused by sea-level rise.

This practical approach continues to be welcomed and endorsed by the international community: in the two years since the Declaration was issued over one hundred states have endorsed the approach of not updating baselines.

This marked support from a wide range of geographically diverse states reinforces the importance of the principles of legal stability and equity that underpin the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Preserving maritime zones is important not only for our neighbours in the Pacific but for the

international community as a whole.

We welcome the return of the Study Group next year to the subtopics of statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise, two subjects of vital importance to the Pacific region. As the Study Group's Second Issues paper highlights, a range of existing principles and features of international law support the continuity of statehood in the context of sea-level rise. International cooperation on these matters is of critical importance.

To close, we thank the Commission again for its valuable work on this topic so far and look forward to the Study Group's final consolidated report in 2025. We reaffirm our high regard for the Commission's work, which provides assistance to States in developing, clarifying and upholding the rules that underpin the rules-based international system.

Thank you Chair.