



**Statement by the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS)**

**Agenda Item 80**

**Report of the International Law Commission (Cluster 1) Topic:**

**Sea-Level Rise in relation to International Law**

**Sixth Committee**

**Wednesday October 29, 2025**

**UN Headquarters**

**Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States. We align ourselves with the statements delivered by Palau on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States and Solomon Islands on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

PSIDS wishes to sincerely thank the International Law Commission and its Study Group on Sea-Level Rise in relation to international law for their seven years of rigorous and inclusive work. This has been a complex and sensitive topic that demanded patience, careful study, and sustained engagement with States. We are deeply appreciative of the Commission's openness in hearing the views of Member States, including small island developing States, and for reflecting those perspectives in its conclusions. The result is a final report adopted by the Commission that carries real meaning for our region and for the international community as a whole.

We welcome the Final Report of the Study Group. For Pacific small island developing States, this outcome represents more than a legal milestone. It reinforces the positions our region has long advanced and recognises the lived challenges that our peoples continue to face. It shows that international law can respond to the realities confronting small island States, and that our concerns are now firmly embedded in the global legal discourse.

The 2021 Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise remains the foundation of our regional position, the relationship under international law between climate change-related sea-level rise and maritime zones. That Declaration proclaims that maritime zones, as established and notified to the UN Secretary General in accordance with UNCLOS, and the rights and entitlements that flow from

them, shall continue to apply, without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes resulting from climate change-related sea-level rise. This position was later echoed by the 2024 AOSIS Leaders' Declaration, which reaffirmed that the preservation of maritime zones is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We welcome the Commission's confirmation that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea contains no provisions requiring States to update baselines, geographic coordinates, charts, or the outer limits of maritime zones once these have been duly deposited with the UN Secretary-General in accordance with the Convention. This interpretation is supported by the principles of legal stability, certainty and predictability that are essential to the law of the sea and broader international law and ensures that the rights and entitlements of States remain secure. For the Pacific, this issue goes to the core of our sovereignty and our long-term security. Maintaining maritime zones in accordance with UNCLOS preserves equity and fairness among States and protects the rights and entitlements of those specially affected by climate change-related sea-level rise.

The Pacific's position on continuity of statehood has been clear and consistent. Our Leaders reaffirmed this through the 2023 Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons, which declared that the statehood and sovereignty of the Members of the Pacific Islands Forum will continue, and the rights and duties inherent thereto will be maintained, notwithstanding the impact of climate change-related sea-level rise. That position was reinforced through the 2024 AOSIS Declaration on Sea-Level Rise and Statehood.

We therefore welcome the recognition in the Final Report of widespread support among States for the continuity of statehood and sovereignty, and for the maintenance of international legal personality and membership in international organizations for States particularly affected by sea-level rise. The Final Report recognises that continuity of statehood in this context is essential to safeguard nationality and to prevent the risk of statelessness. It also draws a clear link between this continuity and the right of peoples to self-determination, including Indigenous Peoples, who cannot be deprived of their collective identity or political status without their consent. These conclusions reaffirm the enduring principles that guide our region, that the legitimacy of a State rests not on shifting shorelines, but on the will, identity, and continuity of its people.

Sea-level rise continues to affect every aspect of life in the Pacific. Families are moving further inland as saltwater intrudes on their homes and crops. Cultural landmarks and burial sites are being eroded by the sea. These are not distant concerns, they are daily realities for many Pacific communities. We therefore welcome the clarity that the Final Report provides on the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise. The Commission reaffirmed that affected persons remain rights holders under international law and that States have a duty to respect, protect, and fulfil

their human rights. It also highlighted the need for international cooperation to ensure that affected communities can preserve their culture, heritage, and identity.

These findings reflect the spirit of our 2023 Pacific Islands Forum Declaration, where Pacific Leaders affirmed that individually and collectively, we bear a responsibility to ensure that all persons affected by climate change-related sea-level rise are protected. Protecting our peoples means protecting our history, our culture, and our human dignity.

The Pacific Small Island Developing States reaffirm our commitment to work with all Member States to strengthen international cooperation on the legal and human dimensions of climate change-related sea-level rise. Our response must be guided by equity, fairness, justice, and shared responsibility. No State should face this challenge in isolation, and no people should lose their rights or identity because of rising seas.

The Final Report provides a strong foundation for the next stage of global work on this issue. We look ahead to the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on sea-level rise in 2026 as an opportunity to translate these findings into a political declaration that reaffirms continuity of statehood, the preservation of maritime zones, and the protection of persons affected by climate change-related sea-level rise. We also acknowledge the complementarity between the Commission's conclusions and the advisory opinions of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Court of Justice. Together, these developments strengthen the role of international law as a living framework for addressing climate change and related phenomena such as sea-level rise, and for ensuring the equality and dignity of all States.

For the Pacific, sea-level rise is not only a question of geography or environment. It is a test of international law and of the international community's commitment to fairness and solidarity. The Pacific Small Island Developing States stand ready to work with all nations to ensure that the rule of law continues to serve as a foundation for justice, stability, and respect for all peoples.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.