

**United Nations General Assembly**  
**Sixth Committee (Legal)**  
**Law Week, October 22 to 26, 2018**  
**Statement by Canada**

Thank you, Chairperson.

Canada greatly appreciates this opportunity to participate in the Sixth Committee Law Week events, and very much welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the important dialogue that will be taking place throughout the week.

We are keen to join today's discussion on the work of the International Law Commission, and wish to express our gratitude to the ILC for its work throughout the year, and in particular for its Report from its 70th session. We wish to recognize the considerable efforts made by ILC members in this regard.

Turning now to the discussion before us, Canada readily recognizes the increasing importance of sea level rise, a climate change driven phenomenon, and the importance of considering its potential implications. We note and share the concerns expressed in this and other fora, by vulnerable low-lying coastal States and small island developing States that are threatened with significant impacts.

Canada is also directly impacted by sea-level rise as a consequence of its own geography. Canada has the longest coastline in the world, and is keenly aware that portions of that coastline, notably in the north, are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Sea-level rise raises complex questions and can lead to legal implications under international law, for example: Law of the Sea issues, statehood issues, and issues related to the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise.

Within the realm of the Law of the Sea, there are questions raised related to baselines and outer limits of maritime zones, existing and future maritime

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delimitations, and islands and their role in the construction of baselines and in maritime delimitations.

Canada notes that these issues are being increasingly raised in UN fora, including in the General Assembly.

Canada adds its strong support for the ILC's decision to include the topic "*Sea-level rise in relation to international law*" in its long-term programme of work. And Canada also supports the ILC adding this topic to its active work programme, so that this topic can be addressed in the shorter term.

When considering these matters, Canada is of the view that legal certainty and stability regarding maritime zones and entitlements are fundamentally important as they encourage international peace and security, and orderly relations amongst States.

Canada is further of the view that certainty and stability are essential to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

In reviewing Annex B of the ILC Report, regarding sea level rise and related areas of work under the Law of the Sea, Canada notes with interest the specific questions offered by the ILC for further consideration. Those questions are relevant, and deserve our collective attention.

Canada nevertheless wishes to note that the consideration of those questions may lead to addressing broader issues, unnecessarily complicating even further the task at hand. Hence, when considering the "*possible legal effects of sea-level rise on the status of islands, including rocks,*" Canada takes the view that the ILC should indeed consider those potential effects, but without entering into the complex debate over the specific characteristics that may grant such status.

Mr. Chairperson, Canada looks forward to our future discussions on these important matters, based on the further work and analysis to be received by the ILC.

Thank you.