



**Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and
Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO)
Invite you to a
Virtual Informal Discussion on
Why it is Urgent to Register and Publish Maritime Zone Information in View of Rising
Seas
29 October 2021, 1:15-2:30 pm (New York)**

Concept Note

Objective

To provide information on the relationship between sea-level rise and maritime zones and the consequent need to deposit charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points with the United Nations Secretary-General.

Background

Climate change has proven to be a phenomenon that poses immeasurable risks and impacts to every nation on earth, affecting billions of people in a multitude of ways. While the effects of climate change are global, the impacts on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are particularly acute, especially on low-lying island nations who face the dangers of sea-level rise.

Pursuant to article 5 and article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), with some exceptions, the outer limits of maritime zones are measured from the low-water lines along the coast as marked on large-scale charts officially recognized by the relevant coastal States (also known as normal baselines) or from straight baselines. Therefore, such baselines are important factors for establishing the maritime zones of a state.

Pursuant to UNCLOS, States are required to deposit charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points concerning baselines, outer limits of maritime zones and maritime boundaries with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. UNCLOS does not explicitly address the impact on baselines or outer limits of maritime zones from loss of land territory resulting from sea-level rise. Shifting of the low-water line landward and variations of other features used to draw baselines could affect the area over which States have maritime entitlements, as well as the basis on which maritime boundaries were delimited. This, as stated in the Report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea A/75/70, has potential consequences for coastal States' sovereign rights and jurisdiction in those areas, including sovereign rights to explore, exploit and conserve living and non-living resources, as well as on the rights and freedoms of other States.

Based on considerations of stability and certainty of international law as well as equity and fairness, several island states have committed to keep maritime zones fixed once they are delineated in accordance with the UNCLOS.

