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THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
UNITED NATIONS | NEW YORK



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CONCEPT NOTE

High-Level Roundtable on Climate Change, Sea-Level Rise and International Law: Current Progress

Thursday 24 October 2024 | 1:00 – 3:00 pm | UN Headquarters, Conference Room 8

Organizer: Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS)

Co-Sponsors

- Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations
- Permanent Mission of Tuvalu to the United Nations

Co-Hosts

- Permanent Mission of the Bahamas to the UN
- Permanent Mission of Peru to the UN
- Permanent Mission of Portugal to the UN
- Permanent Mission of Singapore to the UN
- Permanent Mission of Türkiye to the UN
- Permanent Mission of Vanuatu to the UN

Event description

This high-level roundtable is organized in conjunction with the 79th session of the United Nations Sixth Committee (Legal). The 79th session follows the first UN General Assembly high-level meeting on sea-level rise held on September 25, 2024, the AOSIS Declaration on sea-level rise and statehood of 23 September 2024, the Pacific Island Forum's declarations of 2021 and 2023 on preserving maritime zones and the continuity of statehood, and the International Law Association (ILA) completion of its work on International law and sea level rise after twelve years. The roundtable will provide an opportunity to discuss sea-level rise issues facing small island developing states, with a presentation of Tuvalu's 3D Model of sea-level rise impact and adaptation models. The co-chairs of the International Law Commission Study Group (SG) on Sea-Level Rise in relation to international law will be able to provide a briefing on the progress made to date. In addition, the conclusions of the final report of the ILA Committee on International Law and Sea-Level Rise, which complements the ILC's work, will be presented and discussed.

Since the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) issued its landmark advisory opinion in May 2024, regarding States' legal obligations to mitigate climate change which was requested by COSIS, there has been a notable surge in interest among States to use existing legal frameworks to demand international climate and environmental justice. The ITLOS advisory opinion creates a significant precedent for various ongoing international cases, including the UN General Assembly's request for an advisory opinion to the International Court of Justice about State obligations related to climate change and the requests from Colombia and Chile to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for clarification on the responsibilities of States in addressing the climate crisis under international human rights law. In turn, these pending advisory opinions will create important precedents and set the ground for future actions before courts. As the demand for climate and environmental justice reaches momentum with these three advisory proceedings on climate change, the roundtable will engage in an

interactive dialogue on their expected impact and explore possible future actions that could be considered to advance the climate change agenda in international law.

Objectives and Format. The event will take the form of a roundtable discussion designed to encourage wide participation, to create an inclusive, interactive and dynamic dialogue where participants can actively engage and contribute to the conversation by sharing insights, experiences, and ideas on future direction to address sea-level rise and promote climate justice.

Expected outcomes. Participants will gain an enhanced understanding of the legal framework and achievements to date. They will be provided with an overview of the existing legal framework and key legal achievements related to climate and environmental justice and sea-level rise.

Agenda

A light buffet with refreshments will be served (Sponsored by the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner).

1:00 - 1:10pm	Introduction and welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Nilufer Oral, Co-Chair, ILC Study Group on Sea-Level Rise; Member, COSIS Committee of Legal Experts; Director, Centre for International Law-NUS Singapore
1:10 - 1:30 pm	Opening Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Aubrey Webson, Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the UN • H.E. Tabugao Falefou, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the UN
1:30 - 2:50 pm	Roundtable Sea-Level Rise: current progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. David Freestone, Member, COSIS Committee of Legal Experts • Prof. Nilufer Oral, Co-Chair, ILC Study Group on Sea-Level Rise; Member, COSIS Committee of Legal Experts; Director, Centre for International Law-NUS Singapore • Prof. Patricia Galvao-Teles, Co-Chair, ILC Study Group on Sea-Level Rise • Prof. Juan Jose Ruda Santolaria, Co-Chair, ILC Study Group on Sea-Level Rise • Mr. Bryce Rudyk, Legal Counsel, AOSIS • Ms. Catherine Amirfar, Chair, COSIS Subcommittee on Litigation and Partner, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP • Prof. Jean-Marc Thouvenin, Member, COSIS Committee of Legal Experts and Secretary General, The Hague Academy of International Law • Prof. Phoebe Okowa, Member, ILC and Member, COSIS Committee of Legal Experts <p>Moderator: Nathaniel Khng, Legal Adviser, Permanent Mission of Singapore to the UN</p>
2:50 - 3:00 pm	Closing remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Eseleaofa Apinelu, COSIS Secretary General and Tuvalu High Commissioner to Fiji

Target Audience. This high-level roundtable is open to a broad audience interested in discussing solutions to sea-level rise. It is specifically aimed at all UN missions, international organizations representatives, and specialized organizations and civil society with mandates or expertise on these subject matters and who can contribute practical knowledge and innovative approaches.

Logistics and Registration. Registration is required as room capacity is limited to 130. Please register at <https://forms.gle/PJHQQsxBUB3z86D29>.

For more information, please contact info@cosis-ccil.org.