

**Statement on Sea-Level Rise in Relation to International Law**  
**delivered by Ms. Sanita Pēkale, legal advisor of the**  
**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia on behalf of the Baltic States**  
**21 October**

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 3 Baltic States - Estonia, Lithuania and my own country Latvia.

The Baltic States welcome the work of the International Law Commission (ILC) and commends the progress made by the Study Group and the respected Co-Chairs on sea-level rise in relation to international law.

Discussions on this topic are essential as climate is increasingly affecting and raising multiple issues of international law. We believe that the current report offers an important foundation for further dialogue, and we would like to highlight three key elements relevant to the ILC findings:

Firstly, the ILC discussion on the continuity of statehood in the face of territorial submergence is of great significance. We take this opportunity to reiterate our view that statehood is not affected by a sea-level rise and climate change.

The presumption of statehood continuity, as outlined in the report, ensures that affected states - particularly low-lying coastal and small island nations - retain their sovereignty, even in the case if they lose any territory to sea level rise. We fully support the ILC emphasis on the need for legal certainty in these scenarios, which aligns with international principles of equity, stability, and justice. The Baltic States, in light of our own historic experience of continuing statehood, strongly agree that the loss of territory must not result in the loss of identity or legal clarity.

Secondly, ILC rightfully highlights the fragmented nature of current international frameworks in addressing the legal status of individuals displaced by environmental changes. We echo the report's call for enhanced legal mechanisms to safeguard those displaced by sea-level rise. Specifically, we stress the importance of preventing statelessness, a risk amplified by the potential loss land.

Thirdly, the ILC's recognition of international cooperation as a cornerstone in addressing sea-level rise is particularly valuable. We underscore the importance of shared responsibility in supporting most affected states. The duty to cooperate, embedded in the law of the sea and other international instruments, must be upheld to provide technical and legal assistance to vulnerable countries.

There is no doubt that this is just the beginning – sea-level rise will continue to challenge us to rethink traditional legal frameworks to ensure that no state is erased, no individual becomes stateless and no community is abandoned. The Baltic States stand ready to work with the international community to safeguard sovereignty, human dignity in this fight against sea level rise.

Lastly, we also welcome the inclusion of the topic “Compensation for the damage caused by internationally wrongful acts” in the long-term programme of work of the Commission. We agree that this very timely topic reflects the needs of States.

I Thank you