



**Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
to the United Nations in New York**

Statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Dionisio Babo Soares
Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
to the United Nations

Sixth Committee

**Agenda item 80: Report of the International Law Commission (Cluster I)
80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

30 October 2025

New York

Check against delivery

Mr./Madam Chair,

As an island nation whose future depends as much on the stability of law as on the resilience of the ocean, Timor-Leste attaches the highest importance to the work of the International Law Commission and to the strengthening of the international legal order on which our collective security rests.

Timor-Leste aligns itself with the statement delivered by Palau on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) and is pleased to offer the following remarks in its national capacity.

We convey our deep appreciation to Mr. Mārtiņš Paparinskis, Chair of the International Law Commission, the members of the Commission, and the Codification Division of the Office of Legal Affairs for their outstanding work during the Commission's seventy-sixth session. Their dedication, despite reduced time and resources, reflects the enduring vitality of this indispensable body.

Timor-Leste joins others in expressing sincere condolences on the recent passing of Professor Concepción Escobar Hernández and Ambassador Julio Barboza, whose distinguished service greatly enriched the work and legacy of the International Law Commission.

Timor-Leste welcomes the completion of the Commission's work on sea-level rise in relation to international law and commends the Co-Chairs – Patrícia Galvão Teles, Nilüfer Oral, and Juan José Ruda Santolaria – for their vision and perseverance.

For us, as for all small island developing States, this topic is not theoretical but existential. It concerns the preservation of our sovereignty, our maritime rights, and ultimately our identity as nations. The Study Group's final report affirms with clarity that maritime zones lawfully established shall remain stable, notwithstanding the physical effects of sea-level rise. This principle anchors the continuity of our entitlements and secures the legal foundations on which our sustainable development depends.

Equally significant is the Study Group's recognition that Statehood endures even if territory becomes partially or wholly submerged. By rooting this conclusion in the principles of self-determination and permanent sovereignty over natural resources, the Commission offers reassurance that the disappearance of land does not mean the disappearance of peoples.

Timor-Leste also welcomes the report's focus on the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise, guided by human dignity, equity, and solidarity. We join others in urging that this work inform practical responses across the United Nations – from adaptation finance to mobility frameworks – so that the rule of law becomes a shield for the most vulnerable.

We further note with appreciation the recent *Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (of 23 July 2025)*, which reinforces the Commission's findings on the stability of maritime zones, the continuity of Statehood, and the duty to cooperate in responding to sea-level rise.

Timor-Leste also supports enhanced regional and inter-regional cooperation – including within AOSIS, ASEAN, and other relevant groupings – to promote coherent legal and policy responses to sea-level rise and climate-related displacement.

In this regard, we underscore the importance of exploring pathways for the protection of persons and communities affected by sea-level rise, including through cooperative mobility arrangements and legal safeguards to prevent statelessness.

Mr./Madam Chair,

Timor-Leste notes with appreciation the Commission's continued work on the draft conclusions on general principles of law under the guidance of Special Rapporteur Marcelo Vázquez-Bermúdez. This project strengthens the methodological foundations of Article 38 of the ICJ Statute and contributes to a more coherent and inclusive international legal order.

We stress the importance of ensuring that the identification of general principles reflects the pluralism of legal traditions, including those of developing and small States. Diversity in legal experience enriches, rather than fragments, the universality of international law.

Timor-Leste welcomes the Commission's decisions under Chapter XII of its report, including the addition of new topics to its long-term programme of work – namely *Compensation for Damage Caused by Internationally Wrongful Acts* and *Due Diligence in International Law* – alongside the continued consideration of subjects such as the *principle of non-intervention* and *obligations erga omnes*, which remain of enduring relevance to the equality and sovereignty of States and to the protection of collective interests.

We join others in emphasizing that the International Law Commission must be adequately supported, for its work is essential to maintaining a rules-based international system in which all States, large and small, stand on equal footing. For small and developing nations, the Commission represents far more than an academic forum: it is a guarantor of legal equality, transforming the principle of sovereign equality into concrete, codified rules that shield the rights of all States. By enabling participation on the basis of law rather than power, the ILC helps ensure that justice, not influence, remains the measure of international relations.

The shortened session of the Commission this year, caused by the liquidity crisis, is a matter of grave concern. For small and developing States such as ours, the ILC is often the principal forum through which we contribute to shaping the rules that govern the international community. When the Commission's work is curtailed, the pace of legal development slows, and the gap widens between those with the capacity to influence law-making and those who rely on the clarity of law for their protection. Restoring the Commission's full ten-week session is vital to preserving the inclusivity, equity, and legitimacy of international law itself.

We further commend the Commission's commitment to gender parity and diversity among its members, which enhances the representativeness and legitimacy of its work.

Mr./Madam Chair,

Timor-Leste's own experience has taught us that justice, peace, and sovereignty are inseparable from respect for international law. We therefore attach the highest importance to the work of the International Law Commission as a guardian of legal certainty and as a bridge between principle and practice.

We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the rule of law, multilateralism, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We stand ready to work with all Member States to ensure that the Commission's achievements on sea-level rise and other topics translate into genuine protection for people, planet, and sovereignty – the very values on which Timor-Leste was founded.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair.