



UNCLOS Meeting of States Parties – 36th Meeting (15-19 June 2026)

17 June 2026

Malta National Statement Delivered by H. E Prof Simone Borg

Mr President,

Malta aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union, as well as the joint-statement delivered earlier on behalf of Fiji, Jamaica, Singapore, and Malta. I am now delivering the following statement in our national capacity.

Malta reiterates that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Malta looks forward to the effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. In this context me to make four points.

First, regarding maritime security and the protection of civilian mariners. As a leading responsible maritime nation and Europe's largest commercial flag State, we condemn all forms of hostile acts targeting lawful commercial vessel operations. We must be unequivocal: commercial merchant vessels and their crews constitute civilian objects and civilians, and they should be protected as such under international law. Accordingly, we reiterate our absolute condemnation of all unlawful attacks on civilian seafarers, which must never be tolerated or accepted under any pretext whatsoever.

Beyond hostilities, we note with concern the destabilising global trend of seafarer abandonment and the broader precarity of maritime labour conditions. We affirm that there can be no safety of navigation without safety of operation. Malta highly commends the ongoing work of the International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization and calls upon the international community to sustain its support of ongoing processes to harmonise safety standards uniformly across the entire maritime industry. This will be able to guarantee the fundamental rights, freedoms, and liberties of all users of the seas equally.



Second, Malta firmly upholds freedom of navigation as an *erga omnes* principle of international law, essential to global peace and security. We note recent reports regarding the resumption of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, and welcome cessations of all hostilities which have caused regional and global instability across markets, livelihoods and wellbeing. We reiterate that transit passage is an inherent, non-derogable right that cannot be suspended, hampered with or made contingent upon. We call upon all States Parties to guarantee the safe, continuous, and unimpeded transit passage of merchant vessels through all straits used for international navigation.

Third, the preservation of a rules-based maritime order which extends equally to the legal integrity of the deep seabed. Malta recalls with pride its foundational role in introducing the doctrine of the Common Heritage of Humankind to the international community through our first Permanent Representative Arvid Pardo. We emphasize that this doctrine is not a rhetorical device, but an objective legal regime with specific operational mandates codified under Part XI of the Convention. Today, as the International Seabed Authority faces critical structural pressures to finalize the regulations for exploitation within the Mining Code, preserving this multilateral framework is more vital than ever. To protect this established legal order, we must universally uphold the principle of non-appropriation, ensuring that the Area and its resources remain immune to unilateral claims and are managed exclusively for the benefit of humanity as a whole. This can only be achieved if we collectively support the Authority in fulfilling its global mandate, ensuring that any future regulatory framework carried out successfully both equitable benefit-sharing and the highest environmental safeguards, including the precautionary approach and the obligation of due diligence.

Finally, on the climate-ocean nexus, Malta's watershed initiative on climate change embodied in the seminal UNGA Resolution 43/53 "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind" declared climate change as a common concern of humankind. Both the ICJ and the ITLOS AOs acknowledge this legal maxim as the yardstick, which the international community with which to respond to the severity of the challenges humanity is facing. It is also the guiding legal principle that should lead the application of UNCLOS to remain fit for purpose in safeguarding humanity in unprecedented circumstances.

For import-dependent island States, the systemic and real-world consequences of this nexus are immediate. The accelerating frequency and intensity of climate-change-induced



extreme weather events do not only threaten ecological balance, but such weather events precipitate severe infrastructure disruptions that cripple port functionality, shipping lanes, and supply chains. Unimpeded maritime trade is a lifeline to most island states. This means that the preservation of safe, secure, and predictable shipping cannot be divorced from global climate action. Consequently, Malta asserts that a state's compliance with its international obligations to mitigate anthropogenic atmospheric emissions goes hand-in-hand with fulfilling its duty to ensure the safety of navigation. Meeting these climate objectives to ensure that extreme weather events do not disrupt the architecture of global trade upholds the implementation of our obligations under Part XII of UNCLOS to prevent, reduce, and control pollution of the marine environment from all sources, thereby facilitating international predictability, economic stability, and enduring prosperity. Above all to ensure that our ocean remains our planet's life support system.

Thank you.