



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

UNSC Arria-Formula Meeting: Safe Seas, Shared Security: Freedom of Navigation in an Evolving Security Environment

17 September 2026

Statement delivered by H.E Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta
to the United Nations

Thank you, Mr Chair,

At the outset, I will start by expressing our gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain and to Minister Zayani for convening this meeting, and to the briefers for their insights.

Chair,

Maritime security is not an abstract concern, nor confined to coastal regions. Insecurity across critical maritime routes carries implications for stability, trade and socio-economic well-being.

Allow me to emphasise three points.

First, we must recall the integrity of the legal order established by UNCLOS. As the constitution for the oceans, UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. It represents a carefully crafted package of rights and obligations that must be applied holistically. Freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international law and a cornerstone of peace, stability and predictability. Malta welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2817. Its provisions must now be operationalised through international coordination so that transit passage through international straits may be restored under UNCLOS and customary international law.

Second, the protection of seafarers and commercial shipping. Merchant vessels and their crews constitute civilian objects and civilians under



international law and must never be targeted. Recent incidents, including those on Malta-flagged vessels in the Black Sea and Strait of Hormuz have underscored the risks that hostilities pose to commercial shipping and seafarers. We strongly condemn such attacks, including against vessels lawfully exercising transit passage. Recent experience demonstrates the need for operational arrangements for evacuation, repatriation, crew changes, and access to medical and humanitarian assistance.

Third, preparedness and coordination. Insecurity affecting one critical maritime route can generate cascading consequences across interconnected sea lanes and global supply chains. These disruptions across critical waterways demonstrate the limitations of ad hoc responses. We support strengthened maritime domain awareness, trusted information-sharing, early-warning mechanisms, and arrangements capable of rapidly coordinating the United Nations, IMO, regional organisations, Member States and the industry.

Mr Chair,

Effective implementation of Security Council Resolution 2817, in accordance with international law and UNCLOS, requires sustained engagement among the United Nations, the IMO, regional organisations, Member States and stakeholders.

No single actor can address these challenges alone. Our collective objective should be to ensure that the tools, mandates and expertise across the international system operate in a mutually reinforcing and coordinated manner.

In an interconnected maritime environment, collective preparedness, practical cooperation and shared responsibility remain our best safeguards for secure, open and resilient seas.