



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9260**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 14 February 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Borg/Mrs. Frazier . . . . . (Malta)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
Mozambique . . . . .	Ms. Dlhovo
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Chumakov
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Gürber
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Al-Suwaidi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

Sea-level rise: implications for international peace and security

Letter dated 2 February 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/79)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Threats to international peace and security**

#### **Sea-level rise: implications for international peace and security**

##### **Letter dated 2 February 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/79)**

**The President:** I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, as well as the ministers and high-level representatives, whose presence here today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Fiji, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, the Federated States of Micronesia, Morocco, Nauru, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Niger, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Ukraine and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly; His Excellency Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, Co-Chair of the International Law Commission Study Group on sea level rise and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania; and Ms. Coral Pasisi, Director of Climate Change of the Pacific Community and President of Tofia Niue.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Silvio Gonzato, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Delegation of the European Union to the United

Nations; and Mr. Odd Reidar Humlegård, Special Representative of INTERPOL to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in that regard.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/79, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 February 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

**The Secretary-General:** My thanks go to the Government of Malta for shining a light on the dramatic implications of rising sea levels for global peace and security.

Rising seas are sinking futures. Sea level rise is not only a threat in itself; it is a threat multiplier. For the hundreds of millions of people living in small island developing States and other low-lying coastal areas around the world, sea level rise is a torrent of trouble. Rising seas threaten lives and jeopardize access to water, food and health care.

Saltwater intrusion can decimate jobs and entire economies in key industries, such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism. It can damage or destroy vital infrastructure, including transportation systems, hospitals and schools, especially when combined with the extreme weather events linked to the climate crisis. Rising seas threaten the very existence of some low-lying communities and even countries.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has just released a new compilation of data that spells out the grave danger of rising seas. Global average sea levels have risen faster since 1900 than over any preceding century in the past 3,000 years. The global ocean has warmed faster over the past century than at any time in the past 11,000 years.

Meanwhile, WMO tells us that, even if global heating is miraculously limited to 1.5°C, there will still be a sizeable sea level rise. Every fraction of a degree

counts. If temperatures rise by 2°C, that level rise could double, with further temperature increases bringing about exponential sea level increases. Under any scenario, countries such as Bangladesh, China, India and the Netherlands are all at risk. Megacities on every continent, including Cairo, Lagos, Maputo, Bangkok, Dhaka, Jakarta, Mumbai, Shanghai, Copenhagen, London, Los Angeles, New York, Buenos Aires and Santiago, will face serious impacts. The danger is especially acute for the nearly 900 million people who live in coastal zones at low elevations. That is 1 in 10 people on Earth.

Some coastlines have already seen triple the average rate of sea level rise. I saw with my own eyes how people in small island developing States in the Western Pacific are facing sea rise levels of up to four times the global average. In the Caribbean, rising seas have contributed to the devastation of local livelihoods in the tourism and agriculture sectors.

Rising seas and other climate impacts are already forcing some relocations in Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and elsewhere. Flooding and coastal erosion in West Africa are damaging infrastructure and communities, undermining farming and often costing lives. In North Africa, saltwater intrusion is contaminating land and freshwater resources, destroying crops and livelihoods alike. Somalia is also grappling with saltwater intrusion, contributing to competition over scarce freshwater resources.

Around the world, a hotter planet is melting glaciers and ice sheets. According to the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Antarctica is losing an average of 150 billion tons of ice mass annually. The Greenland ice cap is melting even faster, losing 270 billion tons per year. We should consider the hundreds of millions of people living in the river basins of the Himalayas. We have already seen how Himalayan melts have worsened flooding in Pakistan.

But, as such glaciers recede over the coming decades, over time, the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers will shrink, and rising sea levels, combined with a deep intrusion of saltwater, will make large parts of their huge deltas simply uninhabitable. We see similar threats in the Mekong Delta and beyond.

The consequences of all such events are unthinkable. Low-lying communities and entire countries could disappear forever. We would witness a mass exodus of entire populations on a biblical scale, and we would

see ever-fiercer competition for fresh water, land and other resources. The impact of rising seas is already creating new sources of instability and conflict. We must meet that rising tide of insecurity with action across three areas.

First, we must address the root cause of rising seas — the climate crisis. Our world is hurtling past the 1.5°C warming limit that a liveable future requires, and, with present policies, it is careening towards 2.8°C — a death sentence for vulnerable countries.

We urgently need more concerted action to reduce emissions and ensure climate justice. Developing countries must have the resources to adapt and build resilience against climate disaster. Among other things, that means delivering on the loss and damage fund, making good on the \$100-billion climate finance commitment to developing countries, doubling adaptation finance and leveraging massive private financing at a reasonable cost.

Secondly, we must broaden our understanding of the root causes of insecurity. That requires identifying and addressing a much wider range of factors that undermine security, from poverty, discrimination, inequality and human rights violations to environmental disasters, such as rising sea levels.

That is why, for example, the Peacebuilding Fund actively supports grass-roots resilience efforts against the effects of climate change. We must also improve foresight and early warnings to prepare and protect vulnerable communities. One prime example is our plan to ensure that early warning systems against natural disasters protect every person on Earth within five years.

*(spoke in French)*

Thirdly, we must address the consequences of rising sea levels for legal frameworks and human rights. Rising sea levels are literally causing land masses to shrink, leading to potential disputes over territorial integrity and maritime spaces. The current legal regime must be forward-looking and fill the gaps in existing frameworks. That includes international refugee law. It also means putting in place innovative legal and practical solutions to address the impacts of sea level rise on forced displacement and on the very existence of the land territory of some States. The human rights of people do not disappear when their homes disappear.

Last year, the International Law Commission examined this issue and explored a range of options for addressing it, including preserving statehood despite loss of territory, ceding or allocating portions of territory to the affected United Nations State or even creating confederations of States.

It is essential to have these discussions in order to find solutions, and I commend the delegations in the Sixth Committee that are actively engaged in these issues. We must continue to work in order to protect the affected populations and ensure their basic human rights.

The Security Council has a critical role to play in mobilizing the political will to address the devastating security challenges posed by rising seas. We must all continue to give this issue the visibility it deserves and to support the lives, livelihoods and communities on the front line of this crisis.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the President of the General Assembly.

**Mr. Kőrösi:** I thank Minister Ian Borg and the Permanent Mission of Malta for holding this important debate.

We are in a new era of history — one of cascading, interlocking, rapid and sweeping crises. We cannot deny that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our generation. It was the single most raised issue by world leaders during the high-level week in September 2022. It is the single biggest galvanizer of young people marching in the streets, because our inaction is robbing them of their futures. It is an issue that demands focus and coherence across the United Nations system.

For the General Assembly, that means accelerating action on climate and water. For the Economic and Social Council, it means addressing the social and economic aspects. And if we want to tackle it through a whole-of-United Nations approach, as we should, the Security Council has a role to play, too.

According to the ancient writer from Syria, Publilius Syrus, “Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm.” But our seas are not calm today. They are rising. As mentioned by the Secretary-General, at the current rate, sea levels will be 1 to 1.6 metres higher by 2100, according to the World Climate Research

Programme. That means that in less than 80 years, 250 to 400 million people will likely need new homes in new locations.

It goes without saying that the displacement of hundreds of millions of people is a security risk. With a good part of global agriculture concentrated on coastal plains and low-lying islands, sea level rise is also bringing up long-term questions about humankind’s survival.

In the Nile and Mekong Deltas, some of the richest agricultural regions in the world, 10 to 20 per cent of arable land will sink beneath the water. Those and other fertile river deltas are now rice providers and breadbaskets for their own countries and regions. They are also vital pieces in the complex puzzle of world nutrition to feed our growing population. Losing these areas can have knock-on effects around the globe.

Climate-induced sea level rise is also raising new legal questions that are at the very core of national and State identity. What happens to a nation’s sovereignty, United Nations membership and its citizens’ voting rights if it sinks beneath the sea? There are rules about the creation of States, but none about their physical disappearance. As the Secretary-General has rightly asked, who cares for their displaced populations? How would even the first changes to shorelines influence maritime boundaries? How would that affect exclusive economic zones? I welcome that the International Law Commission and the General Assembly’s Sixth Committee have taken a proactive stance by considering those issues for urgent debate.

We know the risks, and we see the uncertainties and instabilities that we are going to face. We cannot doubt that these will open the door for conflicts and disputes, endangering global peace and security. And where that door is open, the Council has a responsibility to act. It is critical to invest in prevention today, rather than address the implications of food scarcity and mass migration tomorrow.

We can agree that it makes sense morally and financially, and it can take many forms. We should integrate climate analysis into our planning for conflict prevention and protection efforts, and we should recognize the significance of climate action as a key tool for peacebuilding.

Science and data offer impartial evidence to direct our decisions. Science tells us that whether cities or

countries disappear depends on whether we as humans counteract the threat. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and its targets for mitigation, adaptation and finance offer our primary defence against that risk.

We need to collectively raise our ambitions. The General Assembly is doing its part. Just last week, we heard a briefing by eminent scientists on the links between climate, conflict and cooperation. I heard the urgent calls made for world leaders to take a whole-of-Government, whole-of-society approach to those issues.

We have the data. We have the frameworks. What is needed now — as ever — is the political will to act. As President Ramkalawan of Seychelles put it in September (see A/77/PV.5): “We need bold actions, not unfulfilled promises”.

Many at this table will remember 2012, when Hurricane Sandy forced the United Nations Headquarters in New York to close for an unprecedented three straight days. Storm surges from the East River came over the Franklin D. Roosevelt East River Drive and rushed into the lower levels of the United Nations. There were fish swimming in the basement next to the United Nations servers. In the aftermath, the United Nations faced sharp criticism over its silence and lack of preparedness.

More than a decade later, I turn the question to everyone here today: are we prepared? Have each of us done our part to uphold the collective responsibility to manage climate-related security risks? Have we learned the lessons of prevention? As Lao Tzu wisely observed, hundreds of years ago: “If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading”.

Climate emergencies open new windows for cooperation and inclusion. Let us therefore strengthen our partnerships. Let us encourage local expertise to guide our resolve. We have enough crises on our plate. Our agendas are packed, and they are expanding. It is our time to transform. I will work to support Member States to ensure that the General Assembly plays its part in that. I implore the Council to play its role. If not, I fear that the President of the General Assembly in 2100, or even in 2050, will represent fewer than 193 United Nations Member States.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Kőrösi for his briefing.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

**Mr. Aurescu:** I would like to thank the Maltese presidency and my colleague, Minister Borg, for the invitation to brief the Security Council on the highly topical subject of sea level rise and its security implications.

I speak today as a member of the International Law Commission and co-Chair of its Study Group on sea level rise in relation to international law, a position I share with the Foreign Minister of Romania. I would also like to inform the Council that in preparing this intervention, I consulted with my colleagues, the co-Chairs of the Study Group, Ms. Oral of Türkiye, Ms. Galvão Teles of Portugal and Mr. Ruda Santolaria of Peru. My message today is clear: sea level rise, which is a direct negative effect of climate change, has obvious implications for security and stability around the world. It creates global problems that affect the international community as a whole and therefore require global solutions. That is why the United Nations is rightly at the forefront of the efforts to address its consequences, find appropriate solutions and prevent the associated risks of international conflict.

Sea level rise poses a real risk to more than two thirds of United Nations Member States, which are likely to be affected directly or indirectly. The science in that regard is clear, as shown by the most recent assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the alarming projections of sea level rise. Indeed, a growing number of expert assessments conclude that the phenomenon presents mounting dangers for human and State security. The negative national and international security implications and consequences linked to sea level rise include its effects on coasts, which because of that phenomenon are pushed landwards, thereby affecting the baselines, so that their actual position is likely to be affected by the physical changes of the coasts’ positioning and configuration, as well as the maritime zones that are measured from those baselines — territorial seas, contiguous zones and exclusive economic zones — and therefore coastal States’ entitlements to those areas and access to the resources therein are threatened.

Such a loss of the resources on which littoral populations depend for their sustenance is likely to prompt increased competition over natural resources and, together with the deterioration of living conditions, the forced migration and displacement of those populations as well. Sea-level rise can also impact coastal military installations and critical

infrastructure. And most importantly, it can lead to the loss of State territory. Indeed, sea level rise poses an existential threat to low-lying coastal States, especially small island developing States, which may consider their statehood and sovereignty in danger, as their land surface may be totally covered by the sea or become fully uninhabitable.

What are our options for dealing with the security implications of sea level rise? The phenomenon requires policy changes and legal changes at the same time. We need to react quickly and efficiently, including by using all the political, legal and institutional tools provided within the United Nations framework. Since the States' coasts are the first to be affected by sea level rise, there are at least two options for action to protect the coasts and therefore States' territories, populations and rights, as well as their maritime zones and resources, that is, the affected States' interests and rights.

One such course of action is to physically protect the coast through coastal fortifications and consolidation. But that is very costly, and small island developing States and many low-lying coastal States simply cannot afford such costs. The international community must find innovative instruments to support such efforts. In September 2022, at the high-level event on the theme "Staying ahead of the curve: climate security and international law", which was organized by Germany and Palau on the sidelines of the General Assembly's high-level debate, I proposed creating an international voluntary fund for that purpose, and I reiterate that proposal today.

The second option is the use of international law. In taking into account the needs of and appeals from Member States, as well as the fact that the effects of sea level rise represent a pressing concern of the international community as a whole, the International Law Commission (ILC) promptly included in its active agenda for 2019, upon the proposal of the current co-Chairs of the Study Group, the topic of sea level rise in relation to international law. That was followed up, as soon as 2020, by the drafting and presentation of a first issues paper, which I co-authored together with Nilüfer Oral and which focused on the law of the sea aspects related to sea level rise. It generated ample and fruitful debates at the ILC in 2021 and in the Sixth Committee in 2020 and 2021. In 2022, a second issues paper was presented by the other two co-Chairs of the Study Group, which was dedicated to statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea level rise. It

was thoroughly debated last year within the ILC and the Sixth Committee. As we speak, Ms. Oral and I are finalizing a paper in addition to the first issues paper, which focuses on certain important aspects also related to the law of the sea, in order to further develop the analysis of the first issues paper.

What legal solutions can be shaped? With regard to law of the sea aspects, it is obvious that for all States affected by sea level rise, the maritime zones established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are central to their economies, food security, health and livelihoods. Therefore, the concept of legal stability, security, certainty and predictability in relation to maritime zones is of paramount importance. The additional paper on which we are currently working focuses, *inter alia*, on that essential concept. One option for ensuring that much-needed security was already proposed by the co-Chairs in the 2020 first issues paper and endorsed by States from various regions of the world, as evidenced by the submissions to the ILC and a large number of statements presented in the Sixth Committee, as well as by collective regional and cross-regional declarations, such as the August 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise adopted by the 18 member States of the Pacific Islands Forum and the September 2021 declaration by the 39 Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States.

That possible solution refers to the interpretation of UNCLOS that there is no obligation under the Treaty to maintain baselines and outer limits of maritime zones under review or to update charts or lists of geographical coordinates, once they are deposited with the Secretary-General, and that such maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them shall continue to apply without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes caused by sea level rise. In other words, preserving, fixing or freezing the baselines and outer limits of maritime zones is crucial for ensuring legal stability and security, thereby allowing for the safeguarding of the rights of the affected States with respect to their maritime zones.

At the same time, as analysed in the 2020 first issues paper and the 2023 additional paper, which was supported by Member States in their submissions to the ILC and statements before the Sixth Committee, legal stability and security mean that sea level rise cannot be invoked, in accordance with the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, as a fundamental change of

circumstances for terminating or withdrawing from a treaty that establishes a maritime boundary, since maritime boundaries enjoy the same regime of stability as any other boundaries. Such possible options are perfectly in line with the need to preserve the integrity of UNCLOS and the balance of rights and obligations included therein. They are also in line with the mandate of the Study Group, which provides that that ILC topic will not propose modifications to existing international law, such as UNCLOS.

Beyond the law of the sea aspects of sea level rise, another part of the urgent answer to be given by the international community must be to address its increasing humanitarian consequences. I believe that global solidarity is key in that regard. We have a duty to prevent situations in which vulnerable countries must choose between responding to climate change and their own development. In order to avoid possible situations of de facto statelessness, we should keep in mind a number of measures: preserving the fundamental rights and the conservation of the identity of persons who are compelled to settle on the territory of third States as a result of such phenomena; safeguarding the rights of the affected States with respect to their cultural heritage; preserving the right to self-determination of the affected populations; and enabling, through international cooperation, the granting of financial and technical support to affected States when exercising their rights to preserve their own existence.

The impact on local populations, which is the human face of sea level rise, is already quite visible in the most vulnerable areas. For such populations, solutions should be based on international cooperation between the States affected, third States and international organizations and other relevant stakeholders. Vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and indigenous populations, are likely to suffer the most. It is also crucial to involve local populations in the decision-making process relating to their possible relocation. Without such measures, the impact on the human rights of the populations affected and their displacement, whether internally or cross-border, have the potential to cause instability and conflict and to constitute a threat to peace and security.

Moreover, since territory has long been considered one of the requirements for statehood, the submerging of land poses obvious threats to the territorial integrity of States and even to their existence. That is a novel situation for international law and the possible legal

implications should be assessed accordingly. The Secretary-General mentioned some of the solutions. The 2022 second issues paper (A/CN.4/752 and Add.1), as well as last year's dedicated debate in the International Law Commission (ILC), examine past and present experiences and situations in detail on the basis of which legal options might be identified. But the possible international law options are not limited to the work of the ILC. The advisory opinion requested in December from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the advisory opinion under preparation by the International Court of Justice on Vanuatu's initiative, which is also supported by Romania and other States, can shed more light on the legal implications of climate change, including from the perspective of sea level rise. Those are some of the avenues that are being explored or can be further explored in order to identify the most appropriate legal options to deal effectively with the effects of sea level rise. Those endeavours could encourage a higher level of ambition for climate action in the future.

In conclusion, I want to assure the Council of my country's full commitment to continuing to be part of the global efforts addressing the risks that climate change in general, and sea level rise in particular, pose around the world. I encourage the Security Council to stay actively involved in those efforts. Due to its serious implications for international peace and security, the topic of sea level rise should continue to hold the Council's attention. I am sure that together, in solidarity, we will find the right solutions.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Aurescu for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Pasisi.

**Ms. Pasisi:** It is a privilege to be present at this very important debate on sea level rise and the implications for international peace and security. Let me also thank the Government of Malta for inviting me to brief the Council from the perspective of a civil-society organization. My experience is heavily informed from a small island developing State (SIDS) lens, particularly that of the Pacific islands, where I was born, have worked and lived my entire life, and intend to do so for its remainder.

By 2050, within the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren, sea level rise will have exceeded at least one metre for most SIDS, and that will last for thousands of years. In addition, the extreme sea level events that currently occur once in a century will be

experienced every single year. Of course, there are many other scary projections as well, but due to those I have just mentioned alone, sea level rise and the impacts of climate change present a direct security threat and a threat multiplier to individuals, communities, provinces, nations and certainly to our region — the Blue Pacific continent — as a whole. Regardless of whether that is acknowledged by any international body or individual State, it does not change that fact. A threat to one's security is best defined through the lens of those who are affected, not those who continue to be most responsible for its cause. The point at which the threat of sea level rise and climate change becomes so severe that it is deemed a threat to the peace and security of every country in the world is only a matter of time and scale. For many SIDS, that reality is already upon our shores, and for some it has already washed them away.

But how serious is the threat of sea level rise and climate change to the statehood and security of SIDS? The certainty of jurisdiction is what enables law and order and supports the upholding of peace and security. It is well understood how much conflict can arise from ambiguity surrounding which islands belong to which nations and the boundaries defining that in the sea. The Blue Pacific continent is well known as a quilt of geopolitical interests, forged through both world wars, patchworked via the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and coloured by globalization. It is now threatened with being torn apart by the effects of sea level rise and climate change, something that will only be exacerbated by the uncertainty of jurisdiction, as law remains ambiguous about the impacts of sea level rise on the base points by which exclusive economic zones are measured and fixed. It is also being exacerbated by impunity and the continued flouting of responsibility with regard to the failure to act to stop climate change, despite clear evidence of the existential threat it poses to many States, communities and the human rights of individuals the world over. It is a security issue of paramount importance to the Pacific region and its nations, and it is why Pacific leaders have developed the following critical declarations.

First, in 2018, the Boe Declaration on Regional Security was adopted. It elevates climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific.

Secondly, in 2021, the Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-related Sea-level Rise was issued, followed by efforts by individual nations to reinforce it in sovereign law and policy. The Declaration is our region's good-faith interpretation of UNCLOS, noting that the relationship between climate-change-related sea level rise and maritime zones was not foreseen or considered by the drafters of UNCLOS at the time. It is critically important that the international community, the United Nations system and Member States support that declaration and the efforts of individual island nations to secure their statehood.

Thirdly, late last year, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent was endorsed by the Pacific Island Forum leaders. The strategy reinforces commitment and working together as a collective for advancing Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative — an approach that fully appreciates the threat of climate change to our security as a region, nations, communities and individuals.

Fourthly, we hope that next month, as championed by the Government and people of Vanuatu and supported by all Pacific nations and a growing number of countries at the United Nations, the General Assembly will adopt a draft resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States with regard to climate change. As the Secretary-General noted last month, it is an opportunity for the International Court of Justice to examine the conduct that has led the world to the brink of collapse and threatens the very existence of countries, peoples and cultures, as well as the human rights of individuals around the world. It is a critical piece of work for upholding our responsibility to do our best to ensure intergenerational equity.

Let me now turn to the realities of the insecurity already happening in the most vulnerable countries and communities. Long before land goes under water, it will become so degraded that it cannot support human life and the complex and critical ecosystems it once did. That is already manifesting itself across SIDS and coastal States. Coral reefs are bleaching, causing irreparable damage and affecting the vital food sources, livelihoods and cultural fabric of coastal communities and countries. Seawater is seeping into delicate groundwater systems and threatening to salinate drinking water and arable lands. The traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples, who constitute the vast majority of



Pacific island populations, are being lost, as the natural resources to which they are tied are being eroded by sea level rise and the effects of climate change.

The early findings of the *Pacific Security Outlook Report 2022–2023* reaffirm the complexity of those security implications for our region. An ongoing climate security project funded by the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund in the Pacific is assessing the security threat to our lowest-lying atoll nations as those on the front lines where the impacts of sea-level rise and climate change are concerned. At the top of the fears voiced so far are food and water security, coastal erosion and land security, as well as their disproportionate impact on women, girls and children.

There are also unique non-economic impacts, and in many ways they are the most concerning. A nation can be at war and its people still have hope and determination to survive. The war against climate change is quite different. The opponent is much larger and amorphous, and the ability to stop it is outside of our direct control. While we can do our best to adapt with the limited resources we have, we continue to suffer loss and damage and fear for the future of our children. Despite that, SIDS remain resolute and among the most ambitious to lead by example and their young people defy being written off as the orphans of climate change. They are pushing for greater accountability of our generation to the next, whether we sit on a beach or in a glass tower.

Intergenerational equity is a responsibility we must all carry and one at the heart of the Security Council's mandate. What then is the role of the Security Council in acting to address the threat of sea level rise and climate change to the security and peace of the world? In many ways, the Council has the greatest mandate and reason to address the issue, because the fall-out of failing to do so will fall directly into its remit of response. In our region, the increasing demand for concurrent law-and-order and defence responses is already straining preparedness and response capabilities. And that is happening not only in developing countries — New Zealand just declared a national state of emergency because of the impact of consecutive extreme weather events that hit the country in a very short span of time. That is becoming an all-too-common occurrence across the world and is especially devastating to those least able to cope and respond.

What are the solutions? I do not think we have enough time to do justice to that question today, but a great start would be to acknowledge and advocate to stop greenhouse gas emissions, targeting the root cause of the multiplicity of complex security threats. In addition, we must support the efforts of the regions and countries most at risk to secure their jurisdictional space on the planet and the certainty of their existence as States into the future. We must develop and implement an ambitious policy on greening the practices of the United Nations and its key bodies and stakeholders in the field. Wars are costly, not just to people and nations but also to the stability of our planet. We must keep regularly apprised of the manifestations of sea level rise and climate change impacts by combining United Nations efforts with those of other institutions, undertaking site-specific risk assessments and developing appropriate responses. We must go and meet in those places to fully appreciate the situation first-hand. We should give voice to the most vulnerable, in particular women, girls and children, who are disproportionately impacted. That will help to inform our pre-emptive and proactive ability in order to cauterize as much of the potential insecurity and unrest before it becomes so great an issue that none of us can effectively respond.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Pasisi for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta.

I begin by thanking the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the Co-Chair of the International Law Commission's Study Group on sea level rise and Ms. Pasisi for their presence today and sharing their views and observations on the implications of sea level rise for peace and security.

The Security Council was established with the responsibility to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. While wars and conflict persist, we are now increasingly aware of other global challenges that may exacerbate insecurity if left unchecked. Scientific research can help us discern the impacts of new and emerging threats, such as climate change. By tapping into that knowledge, the Council will be better placed to identify, address and drive responses to peace and security.

The manifestations of climate change are multifold and felt across the globe. Ocean-related climate security risks are a daily reality for many countries, with such

threats disproportionately affecting island States, small island developing States, coastal regions and low-lying cities, threatening their very existence. As an island State, Malta knows that reality all too well. In fact, science is what guided Malta when it first proposed the notion that climate change is a common concern to humankind at the United Nations. Today, especially as a member of the Security Council, our commitment is just as strong to ensuring that climate change remains an important part of the discussions of this organ. We are deeply appreciative of the extensive work that has been carried out in this area by the Council over the past few years, and we stand ready to continue building on what has already been achieved.

Today highlights our recognition that sea level rise unleashes threats to the existence, identity and security of peoples and nations. Those threats, both sudden and gradual, have the potential to wipe out entire communities and nations. Submerged coastlines will threaten critical infrastructure and precipitate disputes over scarce vital resources, such as food and water, while pushing our most vulnerable communities into further marginalization. Sea level rise has already resulted in the partial or total inundation of coastal areas, further leading to the loss of land, housing and property, sea water intrusion into agricultural lands and water tables, and the disruption of basic services. The dire humanitarian consequences that could result from rising sea levels are no longer mere rhetoric. Science already forecasts that up to 1 billion people will be at risk from coast-specific climate hazards by the year 2060 and hundreds of millions of people will be displaced by the year 2100. That pattern is set to only increase if no action is taken.

Women and children, including girls — who are largely responsible for securing household water and energy resources — often face the brunt of those climate-induced adverse manifestations, with devastating impacts on family survival. Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and reduced freshwater access disproportionately affect women's small-scale agricultural livelihoods and also limit the capacity of current and future generations to be resilient. Those consequences have now reached a turning point for international peace and security, and it is our belief that the Council must appropriately address those risks. It is amply clear that the issues created by sea level rise run through the very heart of State sovereignty, as they

represent a direct threat to the security of those areas and the people who call those areas their home.

The potential loss of statehood — one of the most severe consequences of rising sea levels — as well as issues related to maritime boundaries and jurisdiction, are an established theme in the current discourse because of associated far-reaching security implications. While the legal issues arising from rising sea levels are under review by the International Law Commission, the obvious security-related risks require the attention of the Council. The political and security consequences of sea level rise reflect a potentially catastrophic reality, which if left unaddressed may lead to a completely different world than the one in which we currently live. Having spearheaded the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which today remains the fundamental pillar that ensures peace and security at sea, Malta continues to be committed to ensuring that the voices of those States and peoples most affected by those threats are heard.

Today we are encouraged to hear about best practices from people who face that reality on a daily basis, especially women, who are on the front line, identifying actions in the field that are long-lasting and can truly drive positive impacts on their populations and regions. As climate change catalyses new waves of activism around the world, threats and violence against women environmental defenders, especially indigenous women, is increasing. Their protection must be an integral part of the global agenda for peacebuilding and for sustaining peace. We are therefore pleased to have this opportunity to engage in an open dialogue, so as to properly address the threats that sea level rise poses to international peace and security, and we look forward to hearing from all delegations today.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique.

**Ms. Dlhovo** (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Mozambique would like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, and your country, Malta, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We greatly value Malta's leadership in conducting the proceedings of the Council, and Mozambique therefore pledges you its full support. We are also very grateful to the President of the General

Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania and the Director of Climate Change of the Pacific Community for their important and insightful statements.

Mozambique believes firmly in the importance and urgency of the topic proposed by Malta today on the impact of sea level rise. Its implications for peace and security and the possible loss of all or parts of States' territory and maritime zones are pressing issues for our times.

Mozambique is a low-lying coastal State that is particularly vulnerable to the effects of sea level rise. We have been experiencing extreme weather events on an unprecedented scale since 2019. With more than 2,700 kilometres of coastline, nine international river basins, a high dependence on agricultural yields and developing infrastructure, my country is extremely sensitive to rising sea levels. Most of our population lives along the low-lying coast. Any changes to those areas therefore have an immediate and detrimental impact on our communities, which are largely dependent on agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods. The scale of Mozambique's increased vulnerability through its increasing exposure to climate risks has prompted us to conduct detailed scientific studies on the impact of those changes, giving us a global view of the impact of sea level rise, especially in low-lying regions such as the Zambezi and Lower Limpopo deltas.

In the past 12 months alone, Mozambique has endured five tropical storms and cyclones. Cyclone Gombe, for instance, which occurred in 2022, affected almost 1 million people. In the capital city and province of Maputo in my country, 40,000 people were affected and nine lost their lives owing to heavy rains and upstream floods. On top of that, much infrastructure was destroyed. We are talking about people who lost almost everything that they had sacrificed a great deal to accumulate in their lifetimes. Now they need help. Many cities, including Maputo, Xai-Xai, Inhambane, Beira, Quelimane, Ilha de Moçambique, Nacala and Pemba are suffering from severe erosion caused by sea level rise and other factors. The problem is also affecting other large coastal cities in Africa, such as Lagos, Luanda, Dar es Salaam, Alexandria, Abidjan, Cape Town and Casablanca, to name just a few. If urgent action is not taken to protect them in the near future, they may disappear. That is why, among other measures, we need to engage in prevention by investing in resilient housing in the coastal communities.

Rising sea levels are expected to affect some regions more than others. Small island developing States are some of the most peaceful nations in the world today. However, population displacement, the loss of territory and possible threats to national identity may deeply affect their stability, peace and security. The possibility of significant territorial loss resulting from sea level rise is a sensitive and worrisome issue, as it encompasses a range of concerns linked to statehood, national identity, refugee status, State responsibility, access to resources and international peace and security. Sea level rise does not pose a threat to land areas alone, as it has the potential to significantly affect the extent of national claims to maritime jurisdiction. Most African States have been able to peacefully settle disputed maritime boundary claims with their neighbours in accordance with international law. However, by undermining the physical basis for the delineation of maritime boundaries, rising sea levels may very well disturb those established maritime boundaries. We therefore urgently need to develop clear rules at the international level to safeguard the certainty and stability of those boundaries, if we are to avoid new conflicts over access to resources.

With a view to mitigating these growing risks, Mozambique has established a national climate-change adaptation strategy, and the results are encouraging. We think that we need protected marine reserves and incentives to promote the active participation of coastal communities in the conservation measures of marine ecosystems. We need to formulate a consensus solution to the displacement and the loss of territory that are bound to come. In that context, among other issues, the international community should reflect on how to reaffirm the principle of self-determination and the continuation of statehood in perpetuity even in situations where territory has been lost.

Let me conclude by reiterating that Mozambique remains fully committed to working closely with the international community on disaster prevention. We are certain that together we can lessen the negative impact because there is strength in numbers, and the united determination of our countries will be the key to winning this battle.

**The President:** I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United States and member of President Biden's Cabinet.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's discussion. We truly appreciate your presence here with us at this meeting on a very important topic. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General, as well as President Kőrösi and Foreign Minister Aurescu of Romania, and especially our briefer, Ms. Pasisi, for their thoughts and insights. I also welcome the ministers who are here in the Chamber with us today.

Seas rising and overtaking homes, offices, towns, cities and nations should be the stuff of apocalyptic novels and movies. Instead, it is the very real threat we face today. Around the world, the shores of small island nations and low-lying coastal areas are flooding, causing damage, disruption and dislocation on a dramatic scale. Too often, countries have limited national budgets to enhance resilience, little land to lose and constrained migration options. Such challenges all have the potential to disrupt peace and security and exacerbate existing insecurity and conflicts. In my own home state of Louisiana, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects that Gulf Coast waters could rise by as much as two feet by 2050. Already, Louisiana fishers report that rising waters are damaging infrastructure and livelihoods, forcing locals whose families have lived and worked in those areas for generations to move to higher ground. And even right here in New York City, we caught a glimpse into the future during Hurricane Sandy, as large parts of Staten Island, New Jersey, lower Manhattan and the coasts of Brooklyn and Queens were submerged underwater.

The threat of sea level rise is real. It is a direct result of our climate crisis, and it is a matter of international peace and security. The Security Council must take notice and it must take action. More than 680 million people in low-lying coastal areas will lose their homes, livelihoods and communities. Billions more will be displaced. Many will become climate refugees, and most of us will experience severe weather because of rising tides. The Council must also be immediately and specifically concerned with the way that the rising sea levels will make it harder for peacekeeping operations to fulfil their mandates, especially for missions that have coastal borders. For our part, the United States is responding to those challenges by working with communities vulnerable to sea level rise at home and engaging vulnerable States abroad. The Biden Administration has stepped up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including through the

historic Inflation Reduction Act, which puts us on track to meet our commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Internationally, we are urging major emitters to raise their ambitions and meet the Paris Agreement targets. Nothing could be more important for limiting the dramatic effect of our oceans rising. The President's Emergency Plan for Adaption and Resilience is also helping vulnerable developing countries adapt to and manage the impact of climate change, including sea level rise. As part of that plan, we are integrating climate support into critical sectors, such as food security, infrastructure, water and health, and ensuring that vulnerable countries and communities access climate and disaster-risk financing. We are also working with our partners to strengthen early warning systems. As we announced at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we are responding to the Secretary-General's call for early warning for all. We have committed more than \$40 million to help close the early warning gap, including for new resources for small island States in the Pacific. Those efforts are not only important on a humanitarian level but also forestall potential conflicts between and within States ignited by sea level rise.

Finally, we are working to establish international policies to blunt the impact of rising sea levels. At the United States Pacific Island Country Summit held last year, we announced a new policy on sea level rise in maritime zones. That policy affirmed our commitment to preserving the legitimacy of States, maritime zones and associated rights and entitlements that have been established consistent with international law and that are not subsequently updated despite sea level rise caused by climate change. The United States will not challenge such maritime zones, even if they are not subsequently updated to reflect sea level rise caused by climate change. Our new policy reflects the approach taken by the Pacific Islands Forum and the Alliance of Small Island States. We encourage others to adopt practices consistent with that approach and will work with partner countries to establish and maintain baselines and maritime zone limits. Those actions aim to prevent conflict by ensuring that countries maintain access to their long-standing maritime zones and the corresponding economic opportunities.

The truth is that as we look ahead, the threat of sea level rise raises challenging questions on statehood

for certain particularly vulnerable islands. We must work together to address those challenges. Those risks also bring into stark relief the urgency of reducing global emissions and helping vulnerable countries and communities to adapt to a changing climate. That is happening today. Fortunately, the worst impacts can be averted, but we have to act now and we have to act together. We look forward to hearing everyone's views today and partnering to prevent sea level rise in the days to come.

**The President:** I now call on the State Secretary of Switzerland.

**Mr. Gürber** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. We also thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the co-Chair of the International Law Commission's Study Group on sea level rise in relation to international law and Ms. Coral Pasisi for their briefings.

The facts are clear: our planet is getting warmer, causing sea levels to rise and glaciers to melt. Switzerland is at the forefront of the latter phenomenon. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, limiting global warming to an increase of 1.5°C would slow sea level rise. The effective implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is therefore crucial for preventing the worst impacts of climate change. Addressing climate security is one of the priorities of the Government of Switzerland in the Security Council. My country will therefore remain committed to limiting the negative effects of climate change on peace and security. Allow me to highlight three points.

First, rising sea levels caused by global warming can increase insecurity. Rising seas threaten the infrastructure and even the existence of some island and coastal States. Some of those States could end up submerged. Moreover, agricultural production, food security and access to water and housing are threatened by soil erosion and the salinization of water. Some areas are becoming uninhabitable, which could force millions of people to flee within or outside their country. In fragile contexts in which State capacity is limited, that can lead, for example, to tensions over access to basic services. While rising seas affect populations as a whole, they also have a disproportionately negative effect on marginalized groups and women.

Secondly, the Security Council has a key role to play. It must face one of the greatest contemporary

threats to humankind. The Council must have the capacity to anticipate the impacts of climate change on international peace and security through conflict early-warning systems that are based on sound science. It must then integrate the findings of those assessments into its activities, including peacekeeping and special political missions. In that regard, the Climate Security Mechanism's climate advisers are a good example. Nevertheless, sea level rise requires an integrated response from the entire United Nations system, including the Peacebuilding Commission, on the basis of the mandates attributed to each entity working on the issue.

Thirdly, in order to address sea level rise, international law must serve as our guide. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the principle of damage prevention are crucial elements of that law. However, despite the established framework of international law, such climate challenges also pose new and complex questions, for example, with regard to statehood, human rights and the protection of people against the particular effects of such threats. We therefore welcome the ongoing work of the International Law Commission.

Today the impacts of climate change and sea level rise are already being felt in different ways depending on the context. Like the water that links Swiss glaciers and the Pacific islands, their effects on peace and security transcend borders and concern us all. Switzerland has adopted a proactive role in launching the Nansen Initiative with Norway, as well as the Geneva-based Platform on Disaster Displacement. The Platform seeks to improve the protection of people displaced beyond borders in the context of disasters and climate change. Particularly as co-Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, we will remain committed to limiting the negative impacts of climate change on peace and security during our term on the Security Council.

**Mr. Al-Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. Minister, and Malta for convening this important debate. I also want to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his consistent leadership on this issue. I am grateful to Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, Mr. Bogdan Aurescu and Ms. Coral Pasisi for their insightful briefings to us today.

Nowhere are the urgency and the complexity of the climate crisis more evident than in our seas and oceans. Today the Security Council is listening to

the testimonies of people living on the front lines of climate change. They are telling us that their security, livelihoods and identities are already under threat long before temperature rises have risen to 1.5°C. Climate change is already having a devastating impact on peoples, livelihoods and lives today.

The world cannot look away. Warming, rising and acidifying water poses an existential threat, especially to low-lying countries and coastal communities. Many territories are poised to become uninhabitable, even before becoming permanently inundated. We must respond to this crisis with unity and solidarity and with action. We know that we are currently off track with regard to the 1.5°C goals of the Paris Agreement and a meaningfully coping capacity for climate impacts.

I serve as the Director-General and Special Representative of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28). I am joining Member States today because the United Arab Emirates recognizes the urgent need for a coordinated response across the multilateral system. We cannot neglect any element of the climate crisis, including its clear implications for international peace and security. With each body contributing within its mandate, our obligation is to reverse the current trajectories with inclusive, effective and responsive climate action. Accordingly, I would like to emphasize four points that should inform the development of a shared response to the perils that we are discussing today.

First, the potential consequence of sea level rise, such as disputes over resources, the displacement of millions of people and serious implications for sovereignty and statehood, must be at the heart of maintaining international peace and security. We applaud Malta for bringing this issue to the Security Council's attention. But we also recognize that it is a response to the gap in this organ's engagement. Regular reporting by the Secretary-General on the basis of scientific data on, and an analysis of, the risks and impacts of climate change with regard to international peace and security would enable context-specific and evidence-based approaches by the Council. It would also help to sustain the Council's focus and ensure that it complements the ongoing efforts across the United Nations system.

Secondly, we must catalyse greater and higher quality climate finance for fragile and vulnerable countries.

There is glaring international underinvestment in food and water systems, as well as infrastructure resilience. Reform of the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks is a critical dimension of our response, enabling them to run towards, instead of away from, destabilizing climate threats. The loss and damage facility agreed at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must also be operationalized. This is the year to politically recognize the financing gap regarding fragility and to close it. The peace dividends of such actions will be immediate and enduring.

Thirdly, early-action work by humanitarian actors gives us a range of proven tools to reduce the security impacts of sea level rise. It also provides an opportunity to understand the implications for the most vulnerable, such as women and children, and to ensure an inclusive response from the start. Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates is fully supportive of the Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative. We also underscore the urgent need for an annual investment plan, increased data collection and integration with anticipatory action systems.

Fourthly, we must acknowledge and address the unprecedented legal and policy challenges posed by sea level rise. That includes ensuring that the multilateral system offers adequate solutions. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates encourages the International Law Commission's continued work on sea level rise, especially its implications for the law of the sea, sovereignty and statehood. Similarly, we also recognize the important efforts by Pacific small island developing States to advance the normative legal debate on sea level rise.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the United Arab Emirates here in the Security Council, as the incoming President of COP 28 and in all forums to listening to affected communities and responding with ambition and urgency and with action that leaves no country and no community behind. Preventing and addressing insecurity are one of the most important investments that we, as the international community, can make.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I would like to thank Malta for organizing this meeting on this important topic and you, Mr. Minister, for presiding over it. I thank you for bringing the inherent link between climate

and security back to the Security Council. I also thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, Minister Aurescu and Ms. Pasisi for their important information.

It has been said many times, but it needs to be recalled, that there is no greater danger to our bare existence than climate change because, as a threat multiplier for instability at a scale that we can hardly imagine, it risks altering everything on Earth to the point of no return, threatening our very ability to survive.

Sea level rise is one of the most significant effects of climate change. It is a clear sign of a catastrophe in the making, and it is already a reality for tens of millions of people and not only island States, but also many other developing countries, as listed by the Secretary-General today.

Science has been very clear and vocal, and we have been warned: sea level rise will create a profound shift in coastal flooding over the next decades, threatening entire livelihoods and the ability to subsist in many parts of the world. Undisputed scientific reports find that by the end of this century, regardless of our actions, global sea levels will most likely rise up to 1.1 metres or more, one of the direst sea level rise projections ever made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As alarming as that is, the reality may even be worse and its multifaceted implications — as mentioned today — far more complex.

We already see climate change exacerbating poverty, aggravating underdevelopment and causing massive displacement, which, as we know, are among the root causes of conflict. It was rightly mentioned — hundreds of millions will be displaced, forced from their homes by extreme weather events, exacerbated by rising global temperatures.

Let us not forget that more than 30 million people were displaced in Pakistan by the extraordinary floods last year. In many developing countries, the accumulation of climate-related catastrophes chips away at resources and makes each successive disaster more damaging.

That is why climate change should be a core topic on the agenda of the Security Council. It is not only a development issue. It is not only an environmental issue. It is, undeniably, and will continue to be, an acute security issue. Denying it means sleepwalking

into a disaster written in front of our eyes in capital letters. Preventing the Council from doing its part only adds to attitudes that steal the future from our children, punishing them to live with the consequences of our inaction.

We will have no part in it and deplore that the Council has so far failed to put this existential threat where it should be, where it belongs — front and centre in its work — not at the exclusion of other specialized forums and bodies, but as a sign of joining forces and canvassing our collective strength for our own sake and that of our children and future generations, who will be there when the Earth will be more inhospitable, more in danger.

That is why we think we should work with the existing tools and create new ones in order to move in the right direction. I would like to briefly mention some such tools:

First, we need to raise awareness about the impact of climate change on security in order to properly assess and respond to climate-related security risks. The Secretary-General should report regularly to the Security Council — as he did today — on the security implications of climate change.

Secondly, the United Nations needs to increase cross-agency cooperation and coordination in sharing information, knowledge and best practices among States and United Nations missions. We support the appointment of a special representative for climate and security in order to improve the Organization's ability to address climate-related security risks.

Thirdly, we must prioritize early warning systems, which have proven to be effective, and feasible climate adaptation measures that save lives.

Fourthly, ambitious climate plans will remain as wishful thoughts — right, but toothless. Without access to appropriate financing, efforts to mitigate and address the climate-related risks to peace and security will fall short. Mitigating the effects of climate change is a global collective effort, but it starts at home, and we all must do our part.

In 2019, Albania became the first country in the region to adopt a strategy on climate change and related action plans on mitigation and adaptation. We are working and are on a very good track to achieve the United Nations global goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent in the next decade and

achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, in accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In conclusion, while we work to mitigate and address the climate-related risks to peace and security, we must not forget that climate change has a strong gender dimension. Climate change, environmental degradation and sea level rise disproportionately affect women and girls. Climate and environmental action and disaster risk reduction therefore need to be gender responsive, value and promote all women and girls as agents of change and directly address the specific risks that they face.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate Malta on taking the initiative of holding this important debate. I thank the Secretary-General for having perfectly spelled out the stakes of the threat posed by rising sea levels. I would also like to thank the President of the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania and Co-Chair of the International Law Commission Study Group on sea level rise and Ms. Pasisi for their informative briefings.

Gabon is firmly convinced that there is a clear nexus between peace, security and sustainable development. It is a constant domino effect, now exacerbated by the threat of climate change. That threat affects all countries of the world, developed and underdeveloped, and requires a comprehensive strategic response at the national and multilateral levels. The magnitude of the threat requires transcending the preliminary debate about which international institution is best suited to act on behalf of the international community in response to the phenomenon of climate change.

Indeed, the threat to the peace and security of the entire human race is real for coastal States, like Gabon. It is existential and imminent for small island States.

The Security Council must address that fundamental issue, including the range of risks to international peace and security posed by the effects of climate change, and consider action at the international and regional levels. The expected response is primarily preventive and must include risk assessment, planning and appropriate funding for resilience and capacity-building in fragile States.

The scientific evidence is clear on the scale of the threat that sea level rise poses to the territorial integrity of small island developing States and low-lying States,

with particularly severe impacts on coastal communities worldwide and their livelihoods.

Sea level rise has the potential to challenge the basic defining characteristics of a State: a defined territory and a population. We are pleased that the International Law Commission is cognizant of that.

For several decades, global sea level has been rising noticeably, and that trend is accelerating. At the current rate, hundreds of millions of people in Africa will be exposed to sea level rise by 2030, with some low-lying African coastal cities potentially becoming uninhabitable in the medium term. In addition, urbanization and the rapid expansion of communities in coastal areas will put more people at risk.

Rising sea levels are causing sudden events. Among those, the most salient are the retreat of the coastline, the intrusion of salt water into the land, coastal erosion, the modification of coastal ecosystems, storm surges often associated with intense cyclones or massive flooding phenomena, the humanitarian consequences of which are often disastrous.

Damage or destruction of infrastructure, increased competition or inequalities in access to land or natural resources, the loss of submerged land, resource scarcity, food insecurity, reduced livelihoods, impacts on coastal economic activities or damage to the heritage and cultural identity function of coastlines are just some of the non-exhaustive list of adverse impacts of sea level rise.

As exposure to the effects of sea level rise increases, so does the likelihood of sudden and forced mass migration of people living in coastal areas due to climate change. Depending on the context, there is a risk that the arrival of large numbers of displaced people, sometimes with different ethnic or religious identities, could exacerbate social tensions owing to identity issues or factors related to access to resources, livelihoods and pre-existing services, with the consequent risk of exacerbating social or political instability, including radicalization that could trigger both intrastate and inter-State conflicts.

At the same time, tensions and conflicts can affect countries' ability to deal with climate-related security risks and significantly increase their vulnerability. That is why the countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are also likely to be vulnerable to high levels of insecurity, which reduces



their ability to respond or adapt to climate change. The strong correlation between the vulnerability caused by climate change and insecurity results in a negative feedback loop, which increases the vulnerability of exposed communities, particularly women and children, who are less resilient and less able to cope with the effects of the consequent destabilization.

Without effective resilience-building or climate-change adaptation strategies, increasingly severe and frequent extreme weather events will continue to have a negative impact on the socioeconomic development of coastal areas. An adequate response to climate-related security risks demands that we raise our expectations in the fight against climate change. The best way to prevent, mitigate and manage climate-related security risks is to address their causes. In the context of fragile States that are already affected by conflict, we must fill the gaps in scientific and traditional knowledge to increase climate resilience and ensure sustainable coastal development. Our understanding of how climate change threatens peace and security and fuels conflict must be improved across the entire United Nations system. Only then can climate policy underpin all other development planning and initiatives.

We cannot talk about global peace, security or sustainability when the effects of climate change make development unattainable. The inclusion of relevant analysis in the regular reports, risk assessments and early warnings of the Secretary-General is crucial. Gabon therefore endorses the call for the appointment of a special representative on climate and security, which would fill a critical gap in the United Nations system by providing the Security Council with the information it requires. An adequate response to climate-related security risks also requires sustainable and increased funding for climate-change adaptation with targeted funding for the most vulnerable countries and communities.

In conclusion, we will not be able to build or ensure security, or achieve inclusive and lasting peace, if we do not address every element of instability and conflict. They include the threats posed by climate change, including those related to sea level rise. Given the obvious repercussions, which have already had a significant impact on the stability and security of various regions and States, the security dimension of climate change is no longer in doubt. More than ever, the question is no longer whether the Security Council is the

competent organ to deal with the issue but rather how the Council's work will take into account the multifaceted security risks associated with climate change.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Malta for convening this important debate and all the speakers for their contributions. The Paris Agreement has set the course we must take in limiting global warming by 1.5°C and increasing our capacity to mitigate, adapt and be resilient to climate change, especially in the most vulnerable countries. To that end, we need everyone's commitment. I will underscore two points.

The first is the observation that global warming is causing sea levels to rise and posing a threat to international peace and security. As a vital carbon pump, the ocean absorbs more than 90 per cent of the excess heat generated by human activity. At the same time, that is leading to rising water temperatures and the rapid and almost irreversible deterioration of marine ecosystems. It is therefore by combating climate change that we can protect the ocean. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the oceans and the cryosphere predicts a rise in global sea level by 48 centimetres in 2100. That means that productive areas, agricultural land and homes will be submerged and uninhabitable in the future. Small island developing States are by their nature the most exposed to the effects of climate change on the oceans. Their very survival is at stake. Besides sea level rise, all the cumulative disruptive effects caused by climate change are potential sources of instability and conflict — scarcity of resources, the disappearance of submerged land, forced migration and food insecurity, to name only a few related issues. We must anticipate and respond to the state of emergency that the ocean, our shared resource, is facing.

In that challenging context, the response to climate risk requires a global and preventive approach. In *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), the Secretary-General provides us with a road map for building peace, creating the conditions necessary for sustainable and inclusive development and simultaneously combating the effects of climate change. France is contributing to the international community's efforts to counter the security consequences of rising sea levels through initiatives to increase States' resilience to climate change, including the Climate Risk and Early Warning System Initiative, which is aimed at improving early-warning systems to address climate risks in the countries most vulnerable

to disasters and to which France will double its annual contribution to €8 million by 2023.

The entire United Nations system must act in a coordinated manner to reduce climate risks, whether through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement or the Security Council. I would like to acknowledge the role of the Climate Security Mechanism in building resilience to climate risk, and I would be remiss if I failed to mention the Convention on Biological Diversity. In keeping with Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, we must promote nature-based solutions.

The threat posed by rising sea levels is no longer in doubt. It is therefore up to us to urgently commit to dealing with it while there is still time. It is in that spirit of commitment that France, together with Costa Rica, will be proud to host the next Ocean Conference in 2025. We will address this subject as one of the Conference's priorities.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's high-level open debate on such an important theme for island countries, including Japan. Japan commends the solidarity shown by Malta with small island developing States (SIDS) in addressing the impact of sea level rise. I also thank all the briefers for their valuable contributions.

The looming sea level rise is threatening people's safety and existence in various ways. Nevertheless, when we talk about international peace and security and focus only on how to prevent international armed conflict, we need to recognize that the threat of sea level rise is as imminent and critical as threats such as those posed by invasion by a foreign nation. At the core of both crises, human life and dignity are at stake, and as such both are serious security issues. While it is obvious that the Security Council should get involved when such peace and security issues arise, as Ms. Coral Pasisi said earlier about the expectations that the Security Council should play its role, at the same time it is also obvious that the Council alone cannot offer comprehensive solutions or directly carry out responses to climate-change-related development issues.

However, the Security Council, which is primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, can fulfil its duty by calling together other United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the

Peacebuilding Commission. It is from that perspective that Japan underscores the importance of preventive diplomacy and called for more robust communication between the Council and various players, including the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), at its signature event held last month (see S/PV.9250).

As mitigation and adaptation for climate change are prerequisites for addressing sea level rise, resilient institutions are necessary to implement them as efficiently and effectively as possible. Japan believes that, along with valuable advice from the PBC, the Council can promote sustainable peace through resilient institutions by investing in people, including women, young people and indigenous people, as agents for the shaping and promotion of such institutions. As part of our efforts to strengthen institutions, Japan supports small island developing States (SIDS) in capacity-building, for example through disaster risk reduction training for Government officials, local leaders and children and young people; the second phase of the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the programme for women's leadership in tsunami-based disaster risk reduction led by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

Japan also believes that legal stability and predictability are a necessary foundation for island nations, as well as for the coastal States of continents that are exposed to various uncertainties due to sea level rise. In that context, I would like to make clear Japan's position that it is permissible for coastal countries to preserve the existing baselines and maritime zones established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, notwithstanding the regression of coastlines caused by climate change. We are confident that such an interpretation is legitimate and will ensure legal stability and predictability, in particular for SIDS. I am grateful that our position was welcomed by the delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum, led by the Honourable Mr. Mark Brown, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, at a meeting with Mr. Hayashi Yoshimasa, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, held on 6 February.

Japan is an island country, and as such we fully understand the seriousness of sea level rise. Japan will continue to spare no effort in working proactively within the United Nations to address the issue of sea level rise, as well as that of climate change and security more generally.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil):** I would like to thank you, Sir, for the initiative to convene this meeting and for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on the possible implications of sea level rise for international peace and security. On that note, I thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, Minister Aurescu and Ms. Pasisi for their contributions to our debate today.

Indeed, no ecosystem or State is protected from the negative impacts of climate change, but its effects on oceans may bear even more significant implications for statehood. They can also threaten the livelihoods of communities and impact human mobility. Sea level rise, as a consequence of climate change, is particularly critical for small island States. We strongly empathize with their claim that their very existence is threatened by that phenomenon. The issue is of such importance that it must be discussed in an inclusive, legitimate and representative forum, with the mandate and the right tools to tackle climate change and its implications. It does not fall within the mandate of the Security Council to discuss climate change. If, as set out in the concept note (S/2023/79, annex), the goal of this discussion is to focus on how to prevent political and security concerns related to sea level rise and build resilience, then the securitization of the current debate may prove itself undesirable and counterproductive.

First, as underscored by the Secretary-General in his *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), one of the primary roles of the United Nations should be to act as a source of reliable data and evidence. The same should be applied to the Security Council. In this case, there is no evidence proving that climate change directly causes armed conflicts. In that regard, the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that not only are non-climatic factors the dominant drivers of existing intra-State conflicts, but even in some assessed regions in which extreme weather and climate events have had a small, adverse impact on the length, severity or frequency of intra-State violent conflicts, the statistical association is weak. Moreover, the document also stresses that compared to other socioeconomic factors, the influence of climate on conflict is assessed as relatively weak.

Secondly, despite the many tools in its toolbox, the Security Council does not have the ones we need to fight climate change or to build resilience against its impacts. Therefore, a security-centred discussion cannot offer solutions to support the countries affected

by sea level rise, particularly small island developing States. Instead, we believe that climate change and sea level rise implications need to be dealt with through international law and cooperation for development. The first relates to the political and legal implications of sea level rise for States. The second is a necessary condition for the implementation of the consensus-based, agreed goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to UNFCCC is the forum in which the countries most affected by climate change and its implications have a permanent seat, unlike the Security Council.

Brazil also reiterates its position that solutions to the complex legal implications arising from the topic at hand should be crafted in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including at the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea also has an important role to play, especially in the context of the request for an advisory opinion on climate change and international law submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law in December 2022. The work of the International Law Commission is also key to enhancing our understanding of the legal implications of sea level rise, including issues pertaining to the law of the sea and the protection of persons and statehood. Information and legal certainty are crucial tools for preventing disputes between Member States.

On the sustainable development front, we note with concern that despite the huge interest expressed in our oceans today, Goal 14 is still the least funded of all the Sustainable Development Goals. If we want to build resilience in the countries and communities affected by sea level rise, the first step is to fulfil the goals we have set for ourselves in that respect — some of which are already outdated. Moreover, developed countries do not seem to be as keen on fulfilling their climate finance commitments under the UNFCCC as they are on insisting on addressing those issues within the Security Council. That insistence only reinforces the perception that there is an interest in diverting attention from clear implementation gaps in the 2030 Agenda and in the climate change regime, particularly in the provision of means of implementation for developing countries by developed countries. One of the most relevant outcomes

of the twenty-seventh COP was precisely the decision to establish a dedicated fund for loss and damage caused by climate change to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable — a decision that Brazil fully supported.

I want to take this opportunity to stress how urgent it is for all developed countries to fulfil and update their long-overdue climate finance commitments under the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, including the mobilization of \$100 billion per year to address the needs of developing countries. The mobilization, scaling up and timely delivery of climate financing by developed nations are the need of the hour to support developing States affected by sea level rise and other implications of climate change.

In conclusion, climate change and its related challenges, such as sea level rise, should be handled with the tools of development and international law. Such discussions must remain open to the entire membership of the United Nations. We must strive to avoid any duplication of work and ensure that specific mandates and responsibilities within the United Nations system are respected. Time and energy diverted to reallocate the climate agenda to the Security Council would be better spent fostering financial flows to support existing commitments and enhanced climate and ocean action.

The current consensus that economic, social and environmental challenges should be assessed jointly and in a balanced manner through the lens of sustainable development is the result of five decades of multilateral efforts in the United Nations, starting in Stockholm, in 1972, followed by Rio de Janeiro, in 1992 and 2012, and ending in New York in 2015, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us not put the multilateral achievements of the past half-century at risk to further advance the encroachment of the Security Council on the climate-change agenda.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): Let me thank Malta for its leadership on the issue of sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security. I welcome the fact that you are presiding over today's open debate, Mr. President. I also welcome the participation of all the high-level officials here today. I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and our briefers for their insightful contributions.

The existential risks to humankind posed by rising and increasingly extreme sea levels is evident. The special report of the Intergovernmental Panel

on Climate Change on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate has already sounded the alarm — sea level rise is both a present and future danger. It poses a clear risk to livelihoods as well as to the security and well-being of millions who live in low-lying coastal areas, particularly in small island developing States (SIDS). The homes, culture and identity of millions are being destroyed or lost. Water sources for millions are being salinized. Food systems for millions are being wiped away. The long-term implications of sea level rise for the integrity of maritime boundaries, the ownership of marine resources and the statehood of affected countries call for urgent action. Delaying action means being too late to make the needed difference.

While some may argue that at least in this context we are not threatened by the force of arms, the existential risks posed by sea level rise show that the consequences of the forces of nature could be similar, if not worse. Combined with the complex, multifaceted and simultaneous impact of other crises, the implications of sea level rise for international peace and security are unimaginable. In several parts of Africa, for instance, we are beginning to witness an increasing incidence of coastal erosion, coastal flooding and powerful storm surges, including in West Africa, where coastal communities account for a third of the population and generate more than half of the region's gross domestic product. As estimated by the World Bank, erosion, flooding and pollution cause \$3.8 billion in damages annually in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo alone. In Ghana, my own country, rising sea levels on our 580-kilometre coastal stretch have threatened historic towns like Keta, Ada and Shama. We are therefore sharing in the consequences of rising temperatures, which have triggered migrations of fish stocks, while salinization has contaminated farmlands and freshwater reserves, affecting the livelihoods of fisherfolk and farmers. Frequent inundations have led to forced migration, displacement, the destruction of property and even the loss of human lives. Rising sea levels are therefore affecting lives and livelihoods negatively.

While discussions on climate-change-related subjects in the Council have not always been consensus-based, it is important that we act collectively in anticipating threats to international peace and security, no matter how the risk is defined, and mobilize international commitment and solidarity for addressing those threats, including through the relevant bodies.

That said, we want to point to four priority areas for global action.

First, we believe that in the light of the long-term trajectory of sea level rise, as confirmed by several scientific studies and models, adaptation efforts for protection, reclamation and accommodation to reduce coastal risks should be urgently supported, especially where SIDS are concerned. Such adaptation efforts for developing resilience will require strengthened international partnerships and adequate funding. We also encourage respect for community-based resource management practices and nature-based solutions for sustainable outcomes.

Secondly, mindful of the anthropogenic drivers of the incidence of sea level rise, we emphasize the need for the faithful implementation of commitments to climate action to urgently reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. We therefore urge major emitting countries to redouble their efforts to align their 2030 Paris Agreement emission targets with the 1.5°C goal, which is a survival limit for the most vulnerable. The fact is that 2°C is a death sentence for many small island developing countries in the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

Thirdly, climate action is impossible without adequate financing. Adequate climate financing is equally impossible if developed nations continue to renege on their commitments and obligations. As the Secretary-General indicated last week, developed countries know what they must do, and we join the Secretary-General in calling on those countries to do what they know they must do urgently. At a minimum, they must begin by delivering on the commitments made at the most recent Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27), including the long-delayed delivery of the \$100 billion promised to developing countries; operationalizing the loss and damage fund agreed in Sharm El-Sheikh; doubling adaptation funding, including a stand-alone implementation plan; replenishing the Green Climate Fund by the time COP 28 is held and advancing plans for early-warning systems to protect every person on the planet within five years.

Fourthly, we must strengthen existing mechanisms to peacefully prevent and resolve conflicts in this era of climate change. That includes land-based conflicts over diminishing resources, as well as tensions relating to ocean governance. We are pleased to note that those

dimensions of the problem, as well as the broader implications for the protection of vulnerable persons and those relating to a potential loss of sovereignty, are already under consideration by the International Law Commission. We commend the work of the Commission and the Study Group and call for cooperation and support in their efforts to develop and provide the legal framework for addressing the impacts of sea level rise and for maintaining international peace and security on the oceans and seas.

In conclusion, let me say that the time when the risks to international peace and security could be put into neat, simple categories for action is fading. With the adverse effects of climate change and sea level rise and the looming threat of a climate catastrophe, we face a present and looming danger never previously imagined in modern times. We must therefore mobilize our collective capacity as never before to head off that threat to our existence.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate today. I join others in thanking all our briefers today.

As we have heard, continued sea level rise will increase the likelihood and magnitude of coastal flooding. That could lead to an increase in recognized drivers of insecurity, such as humanitarian disasters, population displacement and competition for natural resources.

Even if those impacts are not yet apparent at scale, that should not stop us from doing more to urgently limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, to monitor and analyse those risks, anticipate and plan for them, and to prevent now the worst consequences of climate impacts on our security in the future. I offer three ways in which we can do that.

The first way is with data and evidence gathering. That includes monitoring and analysis of conflict risk through a climate lens to better understand climate security risks at local and regional levels. For that, we need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to share and analyse information and integrate that into United Nations decision-making. The Council has a clear role in encouraging the United Nations system to consider and respond to the security implications of climate change.

Secondly, we need cohesive strategies to mitigate and address climate-related risks to peace and security in a coordinated way. The United Nations system is well positioned to coordinate efforts on peacebuilding, climate action and building resilience. Again, the Council has a clear role in driving a more coherent United Nations response to those challenges.

Thirdly, we need to help to build the resilience of coastal States. The Government of the United Kingdom has a number of programmes to strengthen resilience in developing countries against climate change, including the \$600 million Blue Planet Fund, the \$50 million Small Island Developing State Capacity and Resilience programme, as well as providing significant support through the Green Climate Fund.

Finally, I note the concerns of some Member States around the risk of maritime border disputes resulting from climate-induced sea level rises and whether maritime baselines should therefore be fixed. The United Kingdom is considering that carefully. We remain open to pragmatic and creative solutions and will continue to engage with other States and the International Law Commission on some of the complex legal issues arising from that.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Malta's initiative, as President of the Council, to convene today's meeting. I also thank Minister for Foreign Affairs Ian Borg for presiding over the meeting personally. I thank Secretary-General Guterres, President of the General Assembly Kőrösi and Co-Chair Aurescu for their briefings, and I have listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Pasisi.

Sea level rise has heightened the vulnerability of the ecosystem and human society globally may give rise to the submersion of territories, human migration and property loss, among a plethora of issues; and poses all-around challenges to human survival and development. For small island developing States and low-lying coastal countries, it is even an existential issue.

China, as a country with a long coastline, also pays great attention to the risks of sea level rise. In addition, the rising sea level has brought about new questions on, inter alia, the law of the sea, statehood and human protection and, as such, has intricate links with security, which all merit in depth and comprehensive study. China expects that the dedicated study on sea level rise in relation to international law being examined by the

International Law Commission will produce practical, objective and valuable outcomes.

Sea level rise is caused by a multitude of factors, such as global warming and polar glacier melting, and is a key indicator for climate change. The international community should step up forward-looking studies on the consequences of the rising sea level and, in the meantime, focus on climate change as its root cause, rigorously slow down global warming and contain the trend of rapid sea level rise.

Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly warned us that the planet is fast approaching a critical point for climate change. The international community should adopt a greater sense of urgency without delay, seize the opportunity to take all necessary actions and prevent climate change from causing irreversible catastrophes for humankind.

As climate change mitigation concerns the future of all humankind, the international community should be unwaveringly determined and relentless in its efforts to achieve the temperature cap set out in the Paris Agreement, and developed countries must take the lead in further reducing emissions. However, since last year, there has been backtracking in the energy policy of some developed countries and an increase, rather than a decrease, in their fossil fuel consumption and carbon emissions, which makes the already elusive global emissions reduction prospect even more precarious. Most developed countries established their carbon-peaking and carbon-neutrality targets and programmes relatively early and should set an example by taking concrete actions to implement them.

Financing always lies at the heart of — and is a key issue for — global climate governance. Developed countries are obliged to providing climate change financing and assistance to developing countries and are responsible for doing so. As early as 2009, developed countries pledged \$100 billion annually to developing countries, which has yet to be truly delivered, making their so-called “commitment” nothing but an empty promise.

Worse still, one country, while passively responding to the funding needs of developing countries, invests hundreds of billions of dollars in hefty subsidies to its domestic manufacturing industry through the so-called “Inflation Reduction Act”, purportedly to promote its energy transition. Such hypocritical and self-serving green protectionism violates World Trade Organization

rules, discriminates against relevant industries in other countries and undermines the collective efforts to tackle climate change globally.

Adhering to true multilateralism and strengthening solidarity and cooperation are the only way to address the climate change challenge. We should stick to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which is related to international equity and justice. Deviation from that principle will severely damage the unity and cooperation of the international community in tackling climate change.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement constitute the main framework for international cooperation on climate change, the hard-won achievements of which are to be jointly cherished and maintained by all.

The Security Council may, under country-specific items and in line with the specific circumstances, examine and provide targeted responses based on an accurate grasp of climate-driven security risks.

Efforts to address climate change and sea level rise should always be aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda and creating conducive conditions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Small island developing States are the most exposed to climate shocks but the least adaptable. The international community should effectively address the concerns and needs of small island developing States and should help them, through financial and technical assistance, to strengthen their capacity-building, enhance their climate resilience and achieve green and low-carbon development. The ocean is the bedrock of survival and development on which all countries of the world depend, which makes marine environment conservation the common responsibility of humankind.

One urgent current challenge is the discharge of 400,000 tons of nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant, which will seriously damage the marine environment and people's health, with small island developing States and their people bearing the brunt. China urges Japan to fulfil its international obligations, dispose of the nuclear-contaminated water in a science-based, open, transparent and safe manner and effectively protect the marine environment and ecosystem.

In the face of climate change, China has always been consistently action-oriented, sparing no effort to fulfil

its commitments. We have made steady and significant progress towards carbon peaking and carbon neutrality, pursuing with determination a green and low-carbon development pathway that prioritizes ecological conservation. We have made a series of notable achievements in the areas of energy conservation, renewable energy, new energy vehicles and forest carbon sequestration, among others, thereby making tangible contributions to global climate governance.

China has always advocated for and engaged in South-South cooperation on climate change. To date, we have signed 45 climate change cooperation instruments with 38 developing countries, built three low-carbon demonstration zones, carried out 42 climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, and trained technical personnel in relevant fields from more than 120 developing countries, which has been welcomed and highly commended by many developing countries, including small island developing States.

China will continue to work with all parties to actively participate in global climate governance and collectively address the challenge of climate change. The twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in December in the United Arab Emirates. China appreciates the contribution of the United Arab Emirates to promoting the global response to climate change and supports its efforts to host a successful conference. It is our hope that all parties will focus on the purposes and objectives of the Convention and together build a fair, reasonable, cooperative and win-win global climate governance system.

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank Malta for organizing today's open debate, which we see as an opportunity to improve our common understanding of sea level rise and its potential implications for international peace and security. We also thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly, Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, Co-Chair of the International Law Commission Study Group on sea level rise, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania for their introductory remarks. We thank Ms. Coral Pasisi, Director of Climate Change of the Pacific Community and President of Tofia Niue, for her interesting briefing today.

The science is clear. Climate change is a global phenomenon that constitutes a major threat to

humankind and the environment. One of the most worrisome effects of the climate-change-induced increase in global temperature is sea level rise, which disproportionately affects developing countries and people in vulnerable situations. In that regard, small island developing States are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise. Ecuador is also affected because of its densely populated coastal zone and fragile ecosystems, including the Galapagos Islands. Rising sea levels and the loss of territory resulting in displacement and climate refugees could lead to a humanitarian crisis. The findings of the International Law Commission, especially those of the Study Group on sea level rise in relation to the law of the sea, statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea level rise, are key to our understanding of the legal implications of sea level rise and to preventing conflicts. We believe that a multidimensional vulnerability index needs to be developed, in addition to improving developing countries' availability of resources, capacity-building and technology transfer.

In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Ecuador recognizes the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the main intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change and fulfilling the commitments taken under the Convention, including by mobilizing \$100 billion of assistance annually for developing countries from 2020 to 2025 and doubling adaptation finance until 2025, as well as through the recent creation of a new fund to address the loss and damage resulting from climate change in vulnerable countries. In that context, I would like to highlight the progress achieved at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, as a framework for implementing adaptation goals.

Ecuador would like to highlight the importance of implementing resolution 1325 (2000) universally. Women's leadership and full and equal participation must be included at all levels of decision-making, especially in addressing the impacts of climate change. As an advisory body of the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission has a guiding role to play in addressing the effects of sea level rise, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which identifies prevention and resilience as essential components of disaster risk reduction, could be an important tool in that regard. In that connection,

my delegation agrees that it would be useful to provide peacekeeping missions with an analytical capacity in order to help States transition from conflict to peace in the context of climate change, while taking into account the different national realities and challenges.

In conclusion, we believe that discussions in the Security Council on climate-change related realities, such as rising sea levels, are fundamental for ensuring the capacity of the United Nations system to contribute in a comprehensive manner to undertaking actions aimed at containing that problem and its impacts.

**Mr. Chumakov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the presidency for having convened today's debate. We also thank our briefers today.

Sea level rise is a global challenge that calls for the particular attention of many States, including ours. Russia has the world's third-longest coastline. Our territory encompasses more than 1,300 islands. Sea level rise is a potential challenge, which should be taken into account in socioeconomic development planning.

No one disputes the scientific consensus that the rapid sea level rise seen over the past century is directly linked to climate change. However, we note with concern that, in our view, the securitization of the climate agenda, which includes the challenges posed by rising sea levels, is counterproductive. We once again emphasize that there is no scientific basis to the climate-security nexus. According to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "compared to other socioeconomic factors, the influence of climate on conflict is assessed as relatively weak".

Let us once again take a close look at the components of our agenda today. Indeed, changing sea levels have economic implications, such as the destruction of critical infrastructure, reduced fish catches, flooded farmlands and worsening food security and access to drinking water. The social impacts of the increasing number of natural disasters are also a concern, as is the failure of countries to put in place modern early warning systems and other technologies. Such socioeconomic challenges can become drivers of instability, but linking their root causes only to the climate aspect is misleading and even harmful. It deflects from seeking solutions and discussing donor commitments. Attention should be paid to the entire range of sustainable development challenges. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for highlighting the whole gamut of problems today.



We would like to make a separate point about the legal aspects. The International Law Commission is currently discussing sea level rise from the perspective of international law. We believe that that discussion is critically important. However, we emphasize that legal experts have not yet reached a consensus, and the results will be presented only after the thorough consideration of each of the three sub-topics, namely, issues pertaining to the law of the sea, statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea level rise. The topic is also being dealt with in the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. We therefore believe that it is premature to discuss the issue, particularly in the Security Council, which is not a dedicated platform for the topic.

We once again underscore the importance of the division of labour within the United Nations system. Three equal pillars, namely, peace and security, human rights, and development, are enshrined in the first lines of the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations. For 77 years now, the United Nations system has been evolving based on this principle. It has been proven that the division of labour in society leads to a more efficient economic system, capable of producing more high-quality innovative goods. By analogy, the division of labour at the United Nations was not envisaged by chance by the founding States of the United Nations, and, in seeking better and innovative solutions to the challenges facing us, we should use the proper tools. Conflict resolution is dealt with by Member States in the Security Council, while development issues, including environmental protection, should be considered in the context of the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is the specialized platform for climatic discussions.

Since we are meeting today to discuss environmental issues, we would specifically like to join our Chinese colleagues, who expressed concern over Japan's plans to dump radionuclide-contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima-1 nuclear power station into the ocean. When making that decision, our Japanese colleagues did not think it necessary to discuss the issue with the neighbouring States. We count on Tokyo to demonstrate due transparency, report actions that may pose a genuine radiation threat and, if necessary, allow for the monitoring of the radiation situation in areas in

which such wastewater discharge takes place, as well as take measures to minimize the negative impact on the marine environment and environmental degradation.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that it is completely justified for island States to seek to draw the international community's attention to their most pressing environmental and development challenges. The Russian Federation takes into account such needs in its development assistance project activities and stresses the importance of discussing such issues, but only at specialized platforms in the context of the development system, within which we can not only treat the symptoms of that condition, but also address its root causes.

**The President:** I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore.

**Mr. Faishal Ibrahim** (Singapore): I would like to congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and to commend it for convening today's debate on the implications of sea level rise for international peace and security, which is a very relevant and important topic. I also wish to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, the Co-Chair of the International Law Commission Study Group on sea level rise and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, and Ms. Coral Pasisi for their briefings.

For small island developing States, including Singapore, climate change-induced sea level rise is an existential threat to our survival, viability and prospects for growth, including, for some, through the loss of territory. The adverse impacts of sea level rise have the potential to contribute to social instability and conflicts, which, in turn, can become a serious risk to international peace and security.

There is an urgent need to implement measures to mitigate, and adapt to, the impacts of sea level rise, such as coastal protection and land reclamation, and to take concrete steps towards addressing or alleviating its potential negative impacts on peace and security.

However, sea level rise and its impacts, including on international peace and security, will ultimately be a global problem that requires multilateral rules-based solutions.

In that regard, I wish to make several points.

First, the Security Council must assume its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security in the context of climate change and sea level rise. While the primary multilateral forum for addressing climate change issues is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), under the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and must discharge that responsibility. In our view, the work of the Security Council in addressing the peace and security aspects of climate change, including sea level rise, can complement multilateral efforts under the UNFCCC. Singapore therefore supported and cosponsored the draft Security Council resolution on climate security in December 2021 (S/2021/990).

Secondly, every country must do its part to support multilateral efforts to address climate change and its adverse effects, including sea level rise and the attendant implications for international peace and security. That includes implementing nationally determined contributions and long-term low-emissions development strategies under the Paris Agreement on climate change, as well as supporting relevant initiatives through the General Assembly to address issues pertaining to peace and security. Capacity-building in the area of climate change mitigation and adaptation action, including protecting coasts and infrastructure against sea level rise and building flood resilience, is also critical, in particular for small island developing States and the least developed countries.

Thirdly, all efforts to address sea level rise and its impacts must be in accordance with international law. Solutions that are inconsistent with international law will serve only to undermine the rule of law at the international level, which would be detrimental to the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, Singapore looks forward to further progress on the International Law Commission's work on the topic of sea level rise in relation to international law.

We also wish to underscore the fundamental importance of the United Nations Convention on the

Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. Just as the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement provide the framework to address climate change, UNCLOS must be the framework within which all law on sea-related issues, including pertaining to sea level rise, should be considered.

Singapore is a small, low-lying city-State, with more than 50 per cent of our population living within about two miles of the coast. For us, the threat posed by sea level rise is of existential proportions. We stand ready to work with members of the Security Council and other Member States in order to address the challenges posed by sea level rise, including its impact on international peace and security.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

**Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein): I thank you, Mr. President, for bringing this important topic to our attention through an official meeting of the Security Council for the first time. It is long overdue for the Council to take on a human security perspective that encompasses all possible threats to international peace and security. The far-reaching consequences of sea level rise demonstrate as clearly as any phenomenon that climate change is in itself a security threat worthy of the Council's systematic attention.

When we addressed Council members in the past on the topic of sea level rise, at an October 2021 Arria Formula meeting, a stand-alone Security Council draft resolution on climate and security (S/2021/990) was being negotiated. Despite the overwhelming support of the United Nations membership for that draft resolution, it was blocked by the use of the veto. As a result of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/262 last year, the General Assembly now has another tool to hold the veto-wielding member accountable and make its position clear on this most important of issues.

Especially for people living in low-lying atoll States, sea level rise is the most pressing security threat. As with all questions of peace and security, women and girls undoubtedly shoulder a disproportionate burden. At the same time, they remain crucial agents of change. A gender-sensitive lens is therefore urgently needed in all climate and security responses.

As we all know, Member States are far off track if we are to avert the worst consequences of climate

change. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, there is no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place. Only drastic reductions to global emissions will spare populations the most serious consequences of sea level rise. That is true for atoll nations, whose groundwater is at risk of saltwater intrusion and whose territory is at risk of inundation. It is also true for volcanic island nations, whose populations predominantly live close to sea level and are, in addition, often at greater risk of natural disasters such as hurricanes. The international community must therefore also ensure that particularly affected States and countries have the legal certainty to make decisions on behalf of their populations.

In line with our commitment to the rule of law, we support efforts to have the General Assembly request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on climate change.

Liechtenstein also appreciates today's presence of Dr. Aureescu, Co-Chair of the International Law Commission Study Group on sea level rise, and continues to support ongoing efforts at the Commission to clarify aspects of international law relevant to sea level rise in relation to the law of the sea, the protection of persons affected by sea level rise and statehood.

In conclusion, I wish to focus on questions of statehood affected by sea level rise. We have heard today references to sea level rise's existential threat for certain States. Part of the role the international community can play for those most affected is to recommit to the right to self-determination of peoples, as set forth in common article 1 of the twin human rights covenants. In situations of sea level rise, where territory is inundated and individuals are forced to relocate, that should not in itself imply challenges to State persistence — a position that Liechtenstein has emphasized in our submissions to the International Law Commission process and for which we see strong support in international law. As we heard earlier today, the novel situation of full or partial inundation of the territory of a State or country or the relocation of its people should not change the presumption in international law more generally that only the relevant people should be able to determine the mode of expression of their right to self-determination, including through statehood.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the other briefers.

The Republic of Korea aligns itself with the joint statement to be delivered by the representative of Nauru on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

The nexus between climate change and peace and security is undeniable. If not addressed in time, climate change does pose a global-scale threat to peace and security in the long term. We are already witnessing that ominous linkage in many parts of the world, including Africa.

Sea level rise epitomizes that gradual but certain destruction. While its impacts are disproportionate in small island developing States and for future generations, none of us are really immune to those impacts.

My delegation acknowledges that there are different views on which forum within the United Nations is best suited to address this issue. However, the Republic of Korea believes that the Council, as the organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, should not remain aloof on this matter. The Security Council must start to join global efforts based on its own perspective, by contemplating the implications of climate change for peace and security and considering its role in preventing possible future conflicts with a sense of urgency.

Against that backdrop, my delegation calls for enhanced efforts to inform the Security Council and equip it with an adequate toolbox. After all, understanding the security implications of climate change requires putting together scientific data with local perspectives and other socioeconomic factors. The Council needs information from diverse stakeholders, such as scientists, regional organizations, other United Nations entities and civil society. United Nations peace operations with mandates reflecting climate-related risks can also be the eyes and ears of the Council on the ground. My delegation encourages the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security to strengthen its role in integrating and developing the information and analysis gathered by those various sources. Draft resolution S/2021/990, which was proposed by the Niger and Ireland in 2021, can also serve as a useful reference. In particular, regular reports and updates by the Secretary-General can be a good entry point for the Council to remain seized of the matter.

The Republic of Korea, as an Asia-Pacific country surrounded by water on three sides, fully sympathizes with the Pacific island countries on the effects of sea level rise. My Government is strongly committed to strengthening its partnership with them, and in that regard, we will host the first-ever Republic of Korea-Pacific Islands Countries Summit this year. Those efforts will be supported by an expansion of our overseas development (ODA), including green ODA, to assist our partner countries with their low-carbon energy transition, and by sharing green and digital technologies. The high-quality data produced will help to inform the climate-related policy priorities and governance of the countries most affected. In the meantime, the Republic of Korea will also continue to support regional efforts such as the Rising Nations Initiative, launched to preserve the statehood and culture of Pacific atoll countries that face existential threats owing to sea level rise.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

**Mr. Hmoud (Jordan):** At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Malta on its presidency of the Security Council for this month and to welcome your Minister for Foreign Affairs. We truly appreciate Malta for its role in organizing this timely meeting on a topic as important as sea level rise in relation to international peace and security.

The issue of sea level rise has drawn significant attention over the past few years, as a result of the scientific evidence that the phenomenon is indeed on a scale that will affect the existence and livelihood of States, especially a number of low-lying coastal States and small island developing States (SIDS) and their peoples. The sovereignty of the States affected will be challenged, and there will definitely be an impact on maritime zones and agreements as a result of sea level rise. Millions of people will also find themselves displaced as a result over the next few decades. There will be massive implications for international peace and security as a result of the potential conflicts arising from such challenges to sovereignty and maritime disputes related to sea level rise. It is therefore vital to ensure that the international community, including the United Nations, acts to prevent such possibilities from becoming a reality and to contain the effects of sea level rise, especially on international peace and security.

International cooperation in the prevention and risk management of sea level rise is crucial to the success of any strategy aimed at combating it. The legal aspects relating to sea level rise are complex, and there are no clear-cut solutions. That said, the International Law Commission is to be commended for its work on the issue. We look forward to the presentation of the outcome of the work of the Commission's Study Group, co-chaired by Mr. Aurescu. It is important to understand that only through concerted international cooperation can we ensure that such legal lacunae can be overcome. One idea is that States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea should also consider negotiating a protocol or other instrument to deal with the maritime aspects of sea level rise, including potentially changing baselines and base points, while obviously taking into consideration issues of stability, security, international relations and borders.

In that context, it is our moral duty, in terms of burden-sharing, as well as a legal one, to assist small island developing States (SIDS) in overcoming challenges to their sovereignty and dealing with the risk that their populations could be displaced. Several developed countries are already planning and have the resources to build sea barriers to protect their territories from sea level rise. The same facilities should be provided to SIDS and other developing States. In that regard, the United Nations and international financial institutions can play a very important role in devising and implementing strategies that include similar solutions for such States. In the same vein, the United Nations should initiate a debate on the risk of human displacement occurring as a result of sea level rise, with a view to addressing all the aspects of the matter and the means by which the international community can share such a burden. With the possibility that millions could be displaced, no country would be able to deal with a massive influx of such displaced persons on its own.

Jordan is also of the view that the Security Council has an important role to play in highlighting the challenges to international peace and security resulting from sea level rise and proposing actions and strategies to prevent the possible consequences, including conflict-prevention measures and the peaceful settlement of dispute mechanisms under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, notably Articles 33 and 36.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt): I congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and I would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Borg for organizing today's meeting. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the relevant international conventions, especially the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, remain the platforms, together with the original mandate, for addressing the climate crisis in all its manifestations, including sea level rise. At the same time, climate change is recognized as a threat multiplier and a driver of conflict in a number of regions around the world, and hence the importance of addressing the increasing connection between climate change and security. Egypt, as President of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27), is fully cognizant of the severe impact that the adverse effects of climate change, including sea level rise, are having on human livelihoods and on our planet.

I would like to point to a number of important facts. First, the latest needs report of the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance highlights that if developing countries are to implement their nationally determined contributions between now and 2030, their needs amount to \$5.6 trillion. Secondly, estimates of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development indicate that annual climate adaptation costs in developing countries could reach \$300 billion in 2030. Thirdly, the adverse effects of climate change will cost Egypt more than 6 per cent of its gross domestic product annually. Fourthly, because it is low-lying land, the Nile delta in Egypt is identified in the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as one of the world's three extremely vulnerable hotspots. The increase in sea level rise will affect 25 per cent of our population and 90 per cent of our agricultural land, with an immediate impact on 2 million people and with a loss of land amounting to a value of \$35 billion. Sea level rise will further add to the challenges that Egypt is facing, as the most heavily populated water-scarce country in the world. Sea level rise will lead to reduced recharge rates and higher evaporation rates and further compound Egypt's current challenges in the area of water security. The United Nations 2023 Water Conference, to be held in March, will present an excellent opportunity to place the water agenda among the priorities of the international community.

Based on the points I have made, we believe that, in order to address the root causes of climate change while adapting to its manifestations, climate finance is urgently needed, including the financial commitments made in the context of the UNFCCC, especially the \$100 billion. Concessional financing must be an integral part of the financial instruments provided to developing countries. Realizing a new quantified financial goal on the basis of the \$100 billion by 2025, as well as double climate financing for adaptation, remains a top priority.

The twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 27), which was held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, succeeded after 30 years in achieving a historic decision on the funding arrangements for loss and damage. The loss and damage fund was established, and the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage was operationalized. The main decision of COP 27 included important outcomes in relation to our discussion today, such as encouraging parties to consider ocean-based action in their national climate goals and reiterating the Secretary-General's initiative to protect everyone on Earth through the universal coverage of early warning systems. The Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Implementation Summit also prominently featured the impacts of climate-related threats. During the round table on the theme "Climate change and the sustainability of vulnerable communities", leaders reaffirmed their commitment to working together to address the adverse effects of climate change.

In conclusion, Egypt remains fully committed to addressing the existential threat of climate change and its implications, including sea level rise and will continue its global efforts to achieve the sustainable development of developing countries while ensuring their peace and security, stability and prosperity.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

**Mr. Ochoa Martínez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico thanks Malta for convening today's debate and appreciates the briefings delivered.

We are seeing more and more examples of how the consequences of climate change can be conflict multipliers. Sea level rise is another phenomenon that threatens the very existence of States, and therefore a better understanding of its potential implications is needed in order to design comprehensive plans of action that include a peace and security dimension. Recent reports of rising sea levels are alarming. According to

the World Meteorological Organization, the rate of sea level rise has doubled since 1993. That phenomenon poses a particular threat to small island developing States and millions of people living in coastal communities, including in middle-income countries. The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are clear with regard to the consequences of human action for sea level rise through the melting of glaciers and the warming of the oceans. Climate action is needed more than ever, through mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage measures, as well as resilience-building.

We reiterate our commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We call for the implementation of the agreements reached at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, including the new loss and damage fund for countries vulnerable to climate change. We also highlight the importance of strengthening disaster risk reduction measures and ensuring the availability of efficient and safe humanitarian assistance. That requires a preventive

approach in which comprehensive risk assessments play a key role. Rising sea levels have legal implications that cannot be underestimated. As recognized in the second issues paper of the International Law Commission's Study Group on the topic, it is important to analyse the legal effects of sea level rise on the continuity of statehood. It is also a priority to work on clarifying the legal regime for the protection of persons affected by sea level rise. With regard to the Security Council, we believe that it must take into account the effects that any phenomenon may have on its sphere of action, so that it can fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It is not a question of securitizing the environmental agenda but of ensuring that this organ does not ignore the multiplicity of factors that can generate current or future conflicts.

**The President:** There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

*The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.*