



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9260th

meeting

Tuesday, 14 February 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Camilleri/Ms. Cassar (Malta)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Bajramaj
Brazil	Mr. Muniz Pinto Sloboda
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mrs. Sanchez Izquierdo
France	Ms. Fériaud
Gabon	Ms. Bouanga Ayouné
Ghana	Ms. Barnor
Japan	Ms. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Mr. Magomedov
Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Tantawy
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Browning
United States of America	Ms. Postel

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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23-04504 (E)



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The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m. and resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I would like 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 the Philippines.

Mr. Peñaranda (Philippines): As an archipelagic State with more than half of its cities and communities located along its coasts, the Philippines is one of the countries of the world most vulnerable to rising sea levels resulting from anthropogenic climate change. Like other island nations, we are now beginning to experience significant sea level rise. For the Philippines, the observed sea level rise has reached 60 centimetres, about three times the global average.

As has been discussed in previous Security Council meetings, we want to underline the importance of not understating or overstating the impact of climate on conflict. The relationship between climate and conflict is not linear but rather complex, nuanced and context-specific. In that regard, we emphasize that the main forum for discussing climate change and for international commitments addressing the various aspects of climate action is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Philippines defines national security as the state or condition in which a nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity, its peoples' well-being, core values and way of life, along with the State and its institutions, are protected and enhanced. The impacts of sea level rise threaten all those elements of security and are specifically a threat to the lives and livelihoods of Filipinos, especially those in coastal areas. It is therefore important to ensure that discussions on the implications of sea level rise for peace and security are always centred on people. The effects of rising sea levels on statehood and security are far-reaching and can include loss of territory, the displacement of populations and attendant tensions related to access to resources, livelihoods and services.

Sea level rise threatens the stability of boundaries. In the Philippines, we caution against inferences favouring ambulatory baselines without demonstrable

State practices and *opinio juris* on the matter. We are more inclined to subscribe to the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, which in the past allowed newly independent States to maintain their maritime borders. *Uti possidetis juris* espouses certainty, predictability and stability where boundaries are concerned and can also serve to prevent conflict over boundaries. We welcome the International Law Commission's decision to work on three main areas related to sea level rise — the law of the sea, forced migration and human rights and issues of statehood and international security. That work should hopefully introduce some certainty on the implications of the phenomenon for the international legal order.

We also hope that the United Nations, especially the Security Council, will take into account the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its projections and recommendations, including that sea level rise at the end of the century is projected to be faster under all scenarios, and that non-climatic anthropogenic drivers will continue to increase the exposure and vulnerability of coastal communities. Sea level rise will have a serious impact on coastal ecosystems over the course of the century. Expected annual flood damage will increase by two to three orders of magnitude by 2100. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and charting climate-resilient development pathways will depend in part on ambitious and sustained mitigation efforts to contain sea level rise, coupled with effective adaptation actions to reduce its impacts and risk.

The convergence of scientific opinion on our way forward should guide us in pursuing our common security agenda on the matter of sea level rise.

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

Mr. Nasir (Indonesia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate, and to thank the briefers for their insightful presentations. The impact of climate change, including sea level rise, has exacerbated our vulnerabilities. Our inability to adapt to it could turn potential security threats into real ones — from the loss of livelihoods and irregular migration to food insecurity and environmental degradation and perhaps even the potential loss of territory from rising sea levels. We believe that firm responses are therefore key to addressing those

challenges. On that note, I would like to highlight three points.

First, we need to work to prevent potential conflicts as a result of sea level rise. We recognize that rising sea levels could have a potential impact on maritime borders, and in that case, we also need to make sure that maritime boundary agreements are not affected. The integrity of existing maritime boundary agreements should be maintained.

Secondly, we need concrete measures to build national resilience. The real danger of climate change on our planet, in particular sea level rise, demands strategic policies and practical measures. Affected countries need to have an adaptive capacity and strong resilience, as the responsibility to respond to the security impact of climate change lies with the countries concerned. Measures to assist those countries should be taken based on their needs and priorities.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen our cooperation and information-sharing. The United Nations system must work in synergy in accordance with the respective competencies and mandates. Climate change and its related security impact, including sea level rise, are a highly complex area, rendering a response by any single actor impossible and unrealistic. It is therefore important to enhance cooperation and exchange information across all United Nations entities to ensure effective response strategies.

The Security Council must consolidate its efforts to better respond to the security impact of climate change, and not to respond to climate change itself. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) must remain the leading forum for addressing climate change and upholding the principles of the Paris Agreement. All measures taken by the Security Council and UNFCCC should be complementary. For its part, Indonesia stands ready to contribute to the global efforts to combat climate change, including the impact of sea level rise.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): Aotearoa New Zealand thanks Malta for convening this important open debate on sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security. New Zealand aligns itself with the statements to be made on behalf of the

Pacific Island Forum and on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

Scientists globally agree that climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and that those impacts will continue to worsen in future. As Ms. Pasisi pointed out this morning, in my own country, New Zealand, just yesterday we declared a state of national emergency in response to Cyclone Gabrielle, so severe is the widespread damage caused by that unprecedented weather event. This is only the third time in our history that a state of national emergency has been declared.

Climate change is a threat multiplier. It amplifies and adds complexity to existing security threats. As the effects of climate change continue to accelerate, the associated impacts will fundamentally affect global security. Climate change remains the single greatest existential threat facing the Blue Pacific. Pacific Islands Forum leaders have declared that the Pacific is facing a climate emergency, which threatens the livelihoods, security and well-being of its people and ecosystems. That is backed by the latest science and the realities lived on a daily basis in Pacific communities.

One of the most significant impacts of climate change in the Pacific will be sea level rise. Some Pacific island countries experience up to four times greater sea level rise than the global average. While the severity and impacts of sea level rise will vary among States and regions, it is a phenomenon that will have implications for all States, and which will pose specific peace and security threats to the international community as a whole.

Sea level rise is already having an impact on vulnerable communities and degrading the habitability of low-lying nations. It has the potential to inundate low-lying territorial features. That would cause immeasurable economic, social, cultural and environmental harm. It is therefore critical that the international community cooperate to develop responses to such issues.

The impacts of rising sea levels also raise important legal questions that are relevant to international peace and security. Maritime zones and the resource rights that come with them are essential to countries' economies, identities and ways of life, especially for small island developing States.

We stand behind the 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea Level Rise. Issued by Pacific Islands Forum leaders and firmly grounded in the primacy of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), it sets out our region's collective position on how UNCLOS applies in the situation of climate change-related sea level rise to promote legal stability and certainty over maritime zones. New Zealand is appreciative of the level of international support that the Declaration has received. We look forward to ongoing engagement with the international community to ensure that the maritime rights and entitlements on which many States rely are preserved, consistent with the principles of equity, certainty and stability that underpin the Convention.

Pacific leaders have also recognized the importance of considering the preservation of statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea level rise. Pacific Islands Forum members, including Aotearoa New Zealand, are examining such issues and are being guided and informed by the applicable principles and norms of international law and the relevant international frameworks and standards.

Finally, allow me to comment on Vanuatu's initiative for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on climate. New Zealand is a proud member of the core group supporting that initiative because of our active interest in having clarity on the international legal implications of climate change.

I want to affirm that Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to supporting countries in taking urgent action on sea level rise so as to build a safer, more prosperous and more sustainable future.

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

Mr. Hermann (Denmark): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely meeting on a matter of the utmost urgency. I also thank our briefers for providing important context for today's open debate.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an estimated 680 million people from coastal communities across the world are particularly

exposed to ocean and cryosphere change, such as sea level rise and the associated loss of biodiversity.

The citizens of small island developing States (SIDS), especially low-lying atoll countries, are faced with the existential threat of their country becoming uninhabitable or even the partial or complete inundation of land territory. If one's land territory becomes inundated, as a people, where does one go, and how does one preserve one's culture and one's heritage? How can sovereignty be maintained and what are the implications for a State's maritime zones? These questions have been raised by SIDS countries for decades, and it is high time that, together, we find clear answers. As the International Law Commission is considering the legal aspects of such questions, we particularly welcome today's discussions on the peace and security implications of sea level rise.

This open debate is well timed given the Security Council's critical role in promoting a greater understanding of the issues at stake in order to prepare and protect people as climate change forces them to adapt and eventually relocate. Today's plight of communities in low-lying coastal areas is tomorrow's plight of the global community. Allow me, Mr. President, to address your pertinent guiding questions.

There is increasing evidence that climate change is a significant risk-multiplier, especially when combined with other factors, such as socioeconomic inequality and weak resource governance. In line with the Security Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security, the Council also has a role in raising awareness of threats to peace and security, including not only when that can prevent, or help to decrease, the risk of a relapse into conflict, but also when it comes to promoting human security. We therefore urge the international community to redouble its efforts to reduce the impacts of sea level rise.

In the relevant resolutions regarding United Nations peace operations, the Council must continue to consider the Organization's supportive role in helping States to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change in order to address climate-related security risks. The Council should explicitly request the United Nations to continue to build its capacity and expertise in addressing climate-related security risks and should strengthen the engagement of United Nations missions with local, regional and other actors in that process.

Some countries, such as Fiji, have already progressed on national legislation and plans on how to respond to the adverse effects of climate change, and the sharing of ideas and lessons learned among those most affected by sea level rise could identify entry points where the United Nations and its wider membership can help support national and regional engagement on addressing climate peace and security risk.

The protection of State sovereignty and individual human rights are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, the United Nations countries remain confident that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas is the appropriate framework for successfully addressing those and other emerging challenges.

But the global security implications for States and their citizens of their country's land territory being completely submerged are yet to be fully discovered. To ensure solutions that promote peace and stability, it is essential that we jointly pursue a deeper understanding of how climate change affects the peace and security situation in specific countries and contexts, but also of related challenges. As a starting point, we reiterate our support for regular reports by the Secretary-General on the topic and for climate-related security risks to be integrated into country-specific reporting to the Council.

Finally, we should never stop looking for opportunities. We know that inclusive natural resource governance is key to peace and security. And where Governments invest in legislation and capacity to benefit all communities, the associated peace dividend can reduce the risk of conflict. Taking action to battle the climate crisis we collectively face is key. Involving the right people is imperative. The participation of rights holders, especially women, youth and the local community, must be at the centre of those efforts in order to ensure that solutions are locally owned and led, that marginalized groups are empowered and that we do not inadvertently harm those we seek to protect.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam is one of the coastal countries hardest hit by climate change, sea level rise and saline intrusion. Approximately 11 to 26 per cent of the population of Viet Nam, mostly in the low-lying Mekong and Red River Deltas, are facing varying risks

of inundation, depending on corresponding scenarios of sea level rise.

That is why Viet Nam understands first-hand the multifaceted adverse impacts of climate change and sea level rise on peace, security and even the existence of States. Sea level rise and other phenomena can exacerbate existing socioeconomic problems and, therefore, increase risks of instability and insecurity while incubating conditions for potential conflicts. That is why this topic is dear to our heart and has always been our top priority in multiple platforms, including during our term as an elected member of the Security Council in 2020 and 2021. In October 2021, Viet Nam organized a Security Council Arrria Formula meeting on the very issue we are discussing today. That is also why we believe that addressing climate change and sea level rise is crucial to national and global peace, security and sustainable development.

The fight against climate change and sea level rise should be comprehensive and requires concerted efforts that put people at the heart of the solution. Those efforts should go hand-in-hand with initiatives to deal with the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty and inequality.

Various dispute-settlement mechanisms should be strengthened. International commitments should be fully implemented. In that regard, special attention and support should be given to vulnerable States, such as least developed countries and small island developing States.

The role and coordination of relevant organs of the United Nations should also be further strengthened. We support the annual Human Rights Council resolution on climate change and human rights to ensure global climate justice. Viet Nam is also among the core group that drafted and strongly supports a General Assembly resolution, initiated by Vanuatu, requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States with regard to climate change. We support the ongoing efforts of the International Law Commission Study Group on sea level rise in relation to international law to identify the legal consequences of sea level rise.

It is incumbent upon the Security Council to heed the security implications of sea level rise and contribute to global efforts to address the impacts of that global threat in a most comprehensive manner. The Council should consider convening more briefings by scientists

and experts and capitalize on international and regional experience on the impact of sea level rise to peace and security.

The Council should consider the development of a comprehensive United Nations database on the multidimensional impacts of sea level rise in order to facilitate the decision-making process for global climate action. The Council should also consider adopting an early warning system on sea level rise in conflict regions. The fight against climate change and sea level rise cannot be won without concerted efforts and inclusive partnership. The Security Council plays a significant role in that endeavour.

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

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): Let me first congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency this month and thank Malta for organizing this debate on the important topic of sea level rise.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the representative of Nauru, on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, and by the representative of the European Union. We wish to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Climate change is not only an environmental concern, but also a major global security threat. It endangers humankind's very existence. The impact of climate change on sea level rise is one of the most critical manifestations of that, as it threatens the territorial integrity of States, jeopardizes livelihoods, exacerbates humanitarian crises, increases social tensions and leads people to move. It also threatens the very existence of low-lying and small island States. There should be no doubt that those States deserve our utmost attention and support. Even in my own country, Slovenia, one of the least-affected countries globally, our current projections are that sea level will rise at least 30 centimetres by the end of the century — and, in the worst case scenario, an entire metre — leaving our coastal areas flooded 40 per cent of the time.

I wish to make the following three points on the topic at hand.

First, we need to work together to implement measures to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise while at the same time supporting affected communities, including through investment in adaptation and resilience efforts. Slovenia joins those who are

increasing their contributions to that end. The severity of the impact demands global solidarity. We need to be there for the countries who need us the most.

Secondly, the United Nations must focus more systematically and ambitiously on the interactions between climate change and global security, including here in the Security Council. We commend Malta for bringing this topic to the Council. By prioritizing these issues, including with discussions at the highest political level, we can prevent the world from becoming even more unjust and dangerously unequal. Building resilience in vulnerable regions and with vulnerable groups is the only way forward. We should pay particular attention to women, children and youth, and older persons, as climate change requires us to acknowledge social inclusion and good governance. The triple humanitarian-development-peace nexus must remain at the heart of any effort to achieve global security and well-being.

Thirdly, as the incoming Chair of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, also known as the Barcelona Convention, the key platform for environmental multilateralism in the Mediterranean region, Slovenia is committed to the protection of the maritime ecosystem and is aware of its importance for peace and security in the Mediterranean region.

In conclusion, my country, Slovenia, remains ready to continue to work globally and proactively on this important issue in future.

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

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile is grateful to Malta for this pertinent debate.

In this statement I would like to raise four main ideas.

First, this issue is relevant in the Security Council. In recent years it has become clear that climate change is a threat multiplier that, acting in combination with socioeconomic and/or political factors, aggravates the risk of violence and intensifies conflict factors such as food insecurity, economic crises and migration. In that way, it contributes to the perpetuation of existing conflicts and makes it more difficult to eradicate them. That was recognized by the Secretary-General in 2009 in his report prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/281 (A/64/350).

We are aware of our own vulnerability to climate change, as Chile exhibits seven of the nine vulnerability criteria under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In particular, my delegation would like to recall the holding of two Arria Formula meetings, in 2015 and 2021, that complement today's meeting with significant synergies. In addition, there have been at least five other Arria Formula meetings and a special Council meeting in September 2021 (see S/PV.8864).

Secondly, Chile believes that it is important to continue discussing sea level rise, as it is one of the most tangible effects of climate change that has been aggravated by human activity. Chile acknowledges the domestic, regional and international security challenges posed by the phenomenon. The international community must adopt concrete measures with a view to cooperating with the communities that will be most affected and avoiding a catastrophe that would affect the security of large areas of regions throughout the world, especially in the Pacific Ocean region, of which our country is a part and in which we are involved in seeking solutions. We must adopt a comprehensive approach based on scientific projections, with an infrastructure strategy to ensure resilience and the active participation of the communities concerned.

Thirdly, Chile appreciates the study being carried out by the International Law Commission, which covers subjects that can provide us with important answers with respect to the protection of the people affected, the stability of maritime delimitations and other issues. Based on that ongoing process, the Security Council must bear in mind certain principles, such as equity, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the duty to cooperate, the polluter pays principle, the principle of territorial integrity and legal stability with regard to the preservation of baselines and the outer limits of maritime zones, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and obligations concerning the non-refoulement of persons affected by sea level rise to third States.

Fourthly, we underscore that women are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters. The reasons underlying that disparity are multidimensional, ranging from economic to cultural factors. Furthermore, the persistence of a humanitarian response that lacks a gender perspective exacerbates the disproportionate impact of climate emergencies. The Council can respond to the triple nexus of gender

inequality, State fragility and climate vulnerability in a number of ways. Its resolutions must acknowledge the overlapping nature of those issues and their specific impact on international peace and security, and set forth mandated tasks to address them. The lack of women's significant participation in developing policies related to climate change has prevented them from incorporating the necessary gender perspective, which is critical for addressing women's specific and differentiated needs.

Chile believes that an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice would be useful to clarify States' obligations in the area of climate change, including with respect to sea level rise. Furthermore, Chile, together with Colombia, has requested an advisory opinion from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the effects of the climate emergency on human rights. A similar initiative has been taken involving the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We believe that all of that will provide the Security Council with important elements for safeguarding international security. Our concern is that climate emergencies lead to the loss of livelihoods, displacement, migration and major disruptions of access to health services, in addition to increasing harmful behaviours. Such consequences make it incumbent upon States to act and promote actions to mitigate the effects of climate change and prevent destructive situations.

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

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of Morocco thanks His Excellency Mr. Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, for convening and presiding over this open debate of the Security Council on sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security. This debate is a timely opportunity to further elaborate on the link between sea level rise, international peace, security and stability, and climate change, which poses an existential threat to many countries and regions throughout the world.

We are only beginning to ask ourselves what implications those issues have for the international community. Currently, international law provides only a limited scope of guidance on how to address the gradual disappearance of a country's landmass below the tide line. At the time when the Charter of the United Nations was adopted in 1945 and subsequently

when the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted in 1982, sea level rise was not even perceived to be an issue, as no one had anticipated climate change — and certainly not at its current rate and proportions. Indeed, sea level rise has many ramifications. Spearheaded by Pacific small island States, the issue has judiciously been elevated as one of the priorities of the International Law Commission (ILC). Morocco welcomes the inclusion of the important subject in the ILC's programme of work and is closely following the work of its study group established for that purpose.

Coastal areas are characterized by large populations, industries, heavily trafficked transportation and communication networks, and extensive coastal tourist resorts. In many countries, erosion and flooding have devastated large areas, including on the African coast. In that regard, as part of Morocco's commitment to and its policy of solidarity with Africa under the auspices of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco is redoubling its efforts to strengthen the climate resilience of African island States. Since the first African Action Summit, convened by His Majesty the King on the sidelines of the twenty-second Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2016, three African commissions on climate change have been launched and made operational, including one dedicated to small island States, chaired by Seychelles. Morocco has pursued its support for that commission in order to ensure institutional financial support for blue and green economies and to strengthen technical, scientific and financial support for small island States. Morocco also notes with interest the Rising Nations Initiative, launched by the leaders of the Pacific atoll countries last year, which aims to protect their statehood, preserve their sovereignty, and safeguard the rights and heritage of the populations affected.

In keeping with its firm commitment to addressing climate issues, Morocco joined the initiative taken by Vanuatu to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice to clarify States' rights and obligations under international law with regard to the consequences of the effects of climate change, especially vis-à-vis the States most affected. I would also like to recall that Morocco continues to strengthen its cooperation for integrated coastal zone management in order to achieve sustainable development. In 2019, with the broad support of Member States, Morocco

introduced the first United Nations resolution (General Assembly resolution 74/210) on strengthening cooperation for integrated coastal zone management for achieving sustainable development with a view to preventing disasters, mitigating their impact and promoting coastal areas' sustainable development.

In conclusion, we call on the Security Council to take into account the link between climate and security in the measures it takes before conflicts break out or escalate. We cannot discuss the issue of sea level rise without including the current reality of the climate migration dimension. Moreover, let us not forget that the acceleration of climate change throughout the world could cause more than 216 million migrants to move by 2050, owing to droughts, crop failures, sea level rise, and desertification. We call on the international community today to build on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, also known as the Marrakech Compact on Migration, and comprehensively address the growing challenge of climate migration in countries of origin, transit and destination.

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

Mrs. Zacarias (Portugal): Allow me to commend Malta for convening this timely meeting and for further bringing to the attention of the Security Council the importance of the climate-security nexus. We also appreciate the valuable contributions of the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the other briefers.

We align ourselves with the statements to be made on behalf of the European Union and by the representative of Nauru of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

Most of the speakers we have heard today have talked about the specific effects of sea level rise, which are diverse and significant, particularly for coastal areas, low-lying coastal States and small island States. We cannot overstate their potential implications for peace and security, including as a driver of conflict and a risk multiplier. Precisely two weeks ago, as co-Chair of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Portugal co-hosted an event with Samoa on climate-induced mobility in SIDS, which left no room for doubt about how climate change is already forcing large numbers of people to leave their homes. The displacement of people, forced migration, threats to territorial integrity and territorial

and boundary disputes, as well as the escalation of current conflicts, are only some of the consequences that we are already witnessing and that are likely to be further exacerbated in future.

As a coastal State with island territories and three quarters of whose population live in coastal areas, Portugal welcomes the opportunity to reflect on the implications of sea level rise for peace and security, and more importantly on how to collectively address the issue. In our view, we must start at the very root of the problem. We need to do more — and faster — to fight climate change. Portugal has been at the forefront of efforts to mitigate climate change. We were among the first countries in the world to commit to climate neutrality by 2050. At the second United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, we pushed for a new set of more ambitious and more effective commitments on implementing the ocean-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we have continued to work on further advancing the climate-water-oceans nexus.

We must also focus on preparedness, on building resilience and on adaptation to the impact of rising sea levels and all of its consequences. Those efforts should also include the ability to answer legal questions arising from sea level rise and its effects. In that connection, we support ongoing reflections on how to preserve stability and legal security in international relations, and we highlight the importance of solutions consistent with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We particularly commend the work being done by the International Law Commission, whose Study Group is co-chaired by a Portuguese member of the Commission, Mr. Galvão Teles. We also fully support Vanuatu's initiative requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States with respect to climate change.

It is crucial to ensure that the United Nations system, as the platform best placed to promote a cooperative and coordinated response to the challenges we are discussing, works coherently to better prevent, prepare for and respond to sea level rise. It is therefore imperative that the United Nations system develop the means to do so. In our view, it will be key to ensure that the Security Council continues to work on a comprehensive approach to addressing the security impacts and risks posed by climate change. We trust that this meeting is a timely step in that direction.

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

Ms. Mrad (Lebanon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on Malta's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. Our countries, both of which border the Mediterranean, have an existential link to the sea, and my delegation therefore welcomes the convening of this debate. We thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Aurescu, speaking on behalf of the Study Group of the International Law Commission, and Ms. Pasisi, our civil-society representative, for their briefings this morning.

The diversity of this morning's briefers clearly demonstrates how important it is that we act together and within a multilateral framework, with the United Nations playing a central role, if we are to be better prepared and able to better respond to the threat of rising sea levels. For small island developing States, their very survival is at stake. While those nations are currently on the front lines where the dangers of sea level rise are concerned, coastal regions are no less affected. Moreover, due to the many and varied consequences of rising sea levels, it is ultimately the entire international community that will be affected by this phenomenon. As we know, it is a result of global warming and can lead to the loss of means of subsistence and depleted resources, as well as the forced displacement of populations, thereby increasing migratory pressure and food insecurity, to cite just a few examples.

That paves the way for greater instability and increased security risks, tension and even conflict, all of which are felt most strongly by States and regions already weakened by crises. Peace and security and development cannot be separated from one another and our emphasis should therefore be on strengthening prevention. Implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change therefore continues to be vital if we are to increase stability and reduce climate-related disasters. In that regard, nationally determined contributions, mitigation, adaptation and resilience plans can help to address the effects of climate change as drivers of instability, crisis and conflict and thereby increase the adaptive capacity of countries, particularly the most vulnerable.

The Security Council needs a better understanding of the links between instability, conflict and climate risks, which is why regular reports by the Secretary-

General on the security implications of climate change are so important. Of course, those implications vary according to the particular situations of regions or countries. In addition, the Peacebuilding Commission, as an advisory body, could examine the repercussions of climate change on peace and security and thereby help to develop strategies for conflict prevention and peacebuilding that take climate considerations into account. Strengthening prevention must be accompanied by predictable and sustainable funding, especially for the States most affected by rising sea levels.

Finally, the various consequences of sea level rise create several legal issues relating to the law of the sea, the survival of States and protection for the people affected. We are therefore following with great interest the work of the International Law Commission on the subject, which will clarify one of the many areas of international law in question and may eventually offer legal and practical solutions for States.

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

Mr. Marschik (Austria): I thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting on sea level rise.

Austria is a mountainous, landlocked country, so why are we speaking here today? We are here because we care. We care about the States whose security — if not their very existence — is threatened by the consequences of climate change. We care not only today, on Valentine's Day, but every day. I should also point out that we align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the European Union, but I would like to add three short points in our national capacity.

First, Austria welcomes the fact that the Security Council is dealing with a key question related to climate change. It is indisputable that climate change is increasingly affecting States and therefore eventually international peace and security as well. The Council should address issues related to climate and security as a key priority more often.

Secondly, sea level rise does not just affect States. Primarily it affects people. Whether those people live in coastal areas or in small island nations, rising sea levels destroy their livelihoods, leading to displacement and conflicts over fresh water and fertile land. Exacerbated by droughts and other natural disasters, as well as conflict, crime and poverty, the very existence of those

people is threatened and their fate must not be ignored. We need to be there in solidarity.

Thirdly, from a legal perspective, sea level rise has implications for several issues, such as territorial sovereignty, statehood and the delimitation of maritime boundaries, as well as entitlements, such as exclusive economic zones and questions with regard to the protection of the people affected. In our view, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which largely reflects customary international law, must be globally and uniformly applied. But many questions remain. Does a State continue to exist if it loses its territory? What happens to its population and resources? Austria welcomes the fact that the International Law Commission has taken up the topic. It is important to look at creative solutions while making use of all technological possibilities.

In sum, this is an issue that dramatically affects the peace and security of a number of United Nations Member States. In its tradition as a strong supporter of multilateralism, international law and solidarity, Austria remains committed to working towards common solutions that help those most affected by climate-security challenges, and it encourages the Council to actively engage on those issues.

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

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): At the outset, I would like to commend Malta for organizing today's open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their important contributions.

Guyana aligns itself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the Alliance of Small Island States.

There are many deleterious effects of sea-level rise that must be examined in the context of their implications for international peace and security.

First and most immediately, it has an impact on food and water security. For example, in my country, Guyana, more than half of the population live at least six feet below sea level. For our coastal communities, sea level rise results not only in soil erosion but also in saltwater intrusion into areas that are critical for food production. The same can be said for many low-lying States and small island developing States. What we see as crucial to building resilience is to ensure that vulnerable countries have the knowledge and financial

and technological capacities to withstand the disruption of food production and the availability of potable water.

Secondly, there are legal implications. As a coastal State, Guyana has maritime boundaries with several States, although some of those remain to be defined. While there is currently no obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to keep baselines and other related boundaries under review once they are deposited with the Secretary-General, one cannot discount the fact that sea level rise has territorial consequences, including the erosion of coastlines and the disruption of baselines and consequently the boundaries determined by those baselines. That has significant security implications. In situations in which boundaries are undefined, there is an even greater possibility for tensions and conflict. When one factors in the potential loss of territory and displacement of people, we may be left with a potential humanitarian situation for which none of us are prepared.

Guyana agrees with those who have emphasized the importance of undertaking mitigation and adaptation measures where possible. But there is a cost attached. Indeed, international cooperation is an obligation for all States, but there is also the matter of equity. We must consider not only where such measures could be implemented but also who can afford them and what happens to those who cannot. The need for the urgent delivery of climate finance is paramount.

Allow me to conclude by stressing the need for bolder climate action, adequate support for vulnerable countries, capacity-building and more robust international cooperation that aligns with the national priorities of the affected States. Time is against us. Commitment must be completed by being translated into action.

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

Mrs. Kamboj (India): Allow me to congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We also thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on this important issue. We express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and all the briefers for their valuable input. I will make two quick points.

First, small island developing States (SIDS) are at the forefront of the challenge of climate change and sea level rise and bear the brunt of a global problem

to which they did not contribute. Adaptation to climate change remains one of the highest priorities for SIDS. Reducing the vulnerabilities of SIDS and strengthening their resilience to climate change should be the collective responsibility of the international community. What we need now is to enhance action on all important policies that address climate change, including by fulfilling commitments on climate finance and technology transfer.

Secondly, with a coastline of approximately 7,500 kilometres and several groups of islands located far away from its mainland, India is cognizant of the adverse impacts of sea level rise. However, it is our considered submission that the Security Council is not the place to address climate-change-related issues or even sea level rise. We have repeatedly underlined that there exists little scientific correlation or evidence of the impact of climate change on peace and security. The most equitable architecture in which to combat climate change is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process, in which each Member State has an equally important stake. In that context, we welcomed the setting up of the loss and damage financial facility in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, and the inclusion of issues surrounding a sustainable lifestyle. The operationalization of that fund needs to be expedited so that the most vulnerable developing countries are equally compensated.

Finally, given the history and backdrop of unkept promises on financial commitments, is it not ironic that developing countries are expected to bear the brunt of everything — the burden of developing climate resilience, industrialization without carbonizing, grappling with adverse climate events and lifting millions out of poverty, all at the same time — while also managing disruptions and uncertainties in global supply chains? Oversimplifying the causes of conflict will not help to resolve them and cannot justify extreme policy measures. Climate change is more about development and less about peace and security. Choosing to address that issue in non-mandated forums, especially those in which all members do not participate on an equal footing, may undermine the larger cause of securing climate justice.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a small coastal country but a big ocean

State, Costa Rica is deeply concerned about the impacts of sea level rise, both on the livelihoods of our citizens and on regional and global stability and security. An urgent starting point for this discussion is the fulfilment of the obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We must meet the agreed emissions cap. We must scale up adaptation and resilience measures, and we must deliver on climate finance commitments, including through the implementation of the loss and damage fund. That is not charity — it is a moral, environmental and economic imperative to ensure international peace and security and guarantee genuine climate justice.

It is also essential to recognize, address and mainstream the humanitarian and security implications of sea level rise across the United Nations system. The effects of sea level rise could foment new conflicts over land and resources, which could lead to the creation of ever more dangerous migration patterns and exacerbate the exploitation of vulnerable groups. The Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission can and must jointly deliver an effective response that takes into account human security and sustainable peace, as established by the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

On another note, island and coastal States face an unprecedented challenge to their statehood — the risk of large-scale losses of parts or all of their territories, which threaten to undermine the foundations of the current international order. A better understanding of the legal implications of sea level rise is therefore urgently needed.

In that regard, Costa Rica welcomes the progress made by the International Law Commission on sea level rise in relation to international law. We support the request by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for an advisory opinion, as well as the request to the International Court of Justice with regard to the obligations of States in relation to climate change. In addition, Costa Rica calls for a discussion of the international criminal law implications of acts that cause irremediable ecological damage, including a potential definition of ecocide.

We remain committed to addressing the implications of sea level rise, including in the context of the third United Nations Ocean Conference, which

Costa Rica will co-host together with France. It is time to urgently and jointly move from words to action so as to ensure a safe and stable future for all.

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

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): It is an honour to take part in this open debate on a matter of great importance, and I would like to commend Malta's presidency of the Security Council for this initiative.

Greece aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union on this topic. We would like to add a few thoughts in our national capacity.

The issue of sea level rise is directly linked to the application and implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The universal and unified character of UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. As the constitution of the oceans, the Convention, which reflects customary international law, sets the legal basis for settling and regulating any relevant issue that may arise. With respect to peace and security issues dealing with sea level rise, UNCLOS provides the answers to questions raised within its proper context.

Predictability, stability and certainty, which are inherent to the Convention and guide its application, involve the preservation of the baselines and the outer limits of maritime zones, as well as maritime entitlements deriving therefrom, in accordance with UNCLOS. Furthermore, the Convention imposes no obligation for reviewing or recalculating the baselines or the outer limits of maritime zones established in accordance with its provisions. Greece underlines the importance of safeguarding the stability of maritime boundaries, confirmed by State practice and international jurisprudence. The International Court of Justice very recently declared that it: "observes that boundaries between States, including maritime boundaries, are aimed at providing permanency and stability". For that reason, maritime boundary agreements are subject to the rule excluding boundary agreements from a fundamental change of circumstances and, hence, sea level rise does not affect maritime boundaries.

Climate change increases the frequency and the impact of extreme weather events, such as floods, land erosion and water salination affecting low-lying

territories and lands, thereby disrupting the lives of millions of people, with food insecurity, water scarcity, epidemics and health risks among its most common consequences.

As a contracting party to all major international environmental conventions, treaties and protocols, Greece actively participates in the ongoing multilateral negotiations and meetings supporting all efforts to strengthen and improve environmental protection at all levels for the benefit of the present and future generations.

In addressing the impacts of sea level rise on peace and security within the framework of international law, the Security Council would be a driving force and an instrumental factor in creating synergies among States, United Nations bodies and regional international organizations. That may be the case when the Security Council is dealing with humanitarian risks or when addressing the impacts of sea level rise and climate vulnerability with regard to the protection of human rights, highlighting gender issues.

In the future, the ability of the international community to anticipate and adapt to the security impacts of sea level rise, as well as climate change in general, may be equally important to our long-term efforts to reverse it. We need to improve our awareness of climate-related security risks by enhancing our understanding of the links between the impacts of sea level rise and security. By integrating and combining actions and policies on climate, security and development, we will ensure the best possible outcome, delivered at multiple levels.

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

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): My congratulations go to Malta on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this crucial and timely open debate on sea level rise. Our appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, 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 in relation to international law, and the civil society representative for their valuable perspectives.

Thailand and the Thai people are not immune to sea level rise. In fact, none of us are. Bangkok is sinking and is at risk, and so are other cities, beaches and low-

lying areas along the 3,000-kilometre coastline of Thailand. As an economy that is dependent on tourism and agricultural exports, sea level rise is a threat to our economic lifeline, our food security, our home and our livelihood.

Thailand is greatly concerned about the impacts of sea level rise currently experienced by our friends around the globe, many of which are much more vulnerable and facing far greater loss and an existential threat. Sea level rise also raises questions concerning statehood, maritime zones and boundaries, as well as the protection of affected persons, many of which are fundamental to the maintenance of international peace, security and stability and to peaceful relations and cooperation among States. It is therefore high time that the issue of sea level rise be urgently addressed. In that regard, Thailand wishes to highlight the following three points.

First, as sea level rise has far-reaching implications for the international community as a whole, it is incumbent upon all of us here at the United Nations to join hands in addressing and responding to the risk to prevent the world from falling into a situation of greater reversals in development gains and of greater risks of tensions or conflicts. Sea level rise affects each and every one of us, threatens our sustainable development trajectories and hampers our plans to create a sustainable future for the next generation. It is therefore a shared interest of each and every one of us to work together to avert further threats that could endanger international peace, security and stability.

Secondly, I wish to highlight a few examples of Thailand's efforts at the national level to achieve climate resilience and strengthen the coping capacity of our local communities. Those include integrating adaptation into land use planning and development, promoting the coping capacity of coastal communities, including in the areas of prevention and surveillance of sea level rise and storm surges, installing surge barriers, planting mangrove forests and devising storm surge evacuation plans to respond to climate change impacts. There is more that can be done. Partnerships and cooperation are essential to supporting such adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Thirdly, sea level rise also raises questions regarding its legal implications. In that regard, Thailand highly values the work of the International Law Commission (ILC) on sea level rise in relation to international

law. We believe that such work of the ILC could be of great practical value to the international community, particularly given the fragmented existing international legal frameworks applicable to the protection of persons affected by climate change, including sea level rise. We recognize the urgency and importance of the ILC's work in that area, and we look forward to its presentation of its further study on all aspects concerning sea level rise in relation to international law, including on the subtopic of the law of the sea at the Sixth Committee meeting in the autumn.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that sea level rise has far-reaching implications for the international community as a whole and that none of us are immune to its impacts. However, it is still within our power to address the threats of sea level rise and minimize its impacts if we act now. Together, we have overcome many threats to international peace, security and stability and many challenges to sustainable development, sustained growth and human security in the past. Together, we can therefore avert the potentially devastating implications of sea level rise. Let us work to make that happen.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Lippwe (Federated States of Micronesia): Micronesia is honoured to address the Security Council on this important subject. I also want to acknowledge the contributions of a fellow Pacific islander, Ms. Coral Pasisi, to this discussion today.

At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statements to be delivered later today by the representatives of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, Palau on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and Nauru on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security. My delegation congratulates Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and organizing the open debate today.

As stated in the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has the primary responsibility, on behalf of the members of the General Assembly, to maintain international peace and security. The discharge of that responsibility must, among other things, be in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations. Two of those purposes are the development of friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and the

achievement of international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.

In that regard, climate-change-related sea level rise presents a challenge of which the Security Council must be seized. As others have noted today, sea level rise poses a particularly acute threat to the overall peace and security of small island developing States like my own, Micronesia, given our relatively small land masses, populations and economies, our geographical remoteness and our deep cultural ties to, and reliance on, our island homes. Distressingly, and on a related note, there is a school of thought in international law and discourse that once sea level rise inundates the land territory of a State, then that State automatically ceases to exist and no longer enjoys statehood in the international community.

In my delegation's view, that school of thought must be rejected by the Security Council, and we call on the Security Council to do so. It would be deeply disruptive to the peace and security of a people and violates the principles and purposes of the United Nations that I identified earlier if the status of people as a State is deemed by the international community to be extinguished by a phenomenon for which such people have minimal responsibility, if any. Such people will not have engaged in any act of self-determination that endorses the loss of statehood and forcing them to accept that loss is fundamentally contrary to the development of friendly relations among nations.

Additionally, to the extent that the forced extinguishing of their statehood disrupts a people's access to economic, humanitarian and other benefits, including rights and entitlements flowing from maritime zones, it is fundamentally contrary to the achievement of international cooperation in addressing economic, humanitarian and other international problems. In the light of the foregoing, the Security Council must make clear, in accordance with its duties and the principles and purposes of the United Nations, that the loss of land territory due to climate-change-related sea level rise does not automatically translate to a loss of statehood enjoyed by the people of that territory.

Along the same lines, my delegation calls on the members of the Security Council and the General Assembly to support the initiative started by Vanuatu for the General Assembly to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on

climate change. As today's open debate indicates, sea level rise, like other adverse effects of climate change, raises major questions under international law that, in our view, an advisory opinion can helpfully address.

In conclusion, my delegation echoes others in calling for the appointment of a special representative for climate and security. Such a special representative could, among other things, strengthen the ability of the United Nations to understand and respond sensitively to all facets of the challenge of climate-change-related sea level rise, including the implications of such sea level rise for statehood and other matters of international law.

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

Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Malta for convening this open debate on the implications of the rise of sea level for international peace and security and also for building on the Arria Formula meeting organized by Viet Nam in October 2021, cosponsored by my country, the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representatives of Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and Nauru, on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

The threats of climate change and rising sea levels are issues that threaten the livelihoods of our people. They undermine peace and security, as well as the prosperity and development of our country. The rising sea level brings with it other issues that threaten international peace and security. It increases storm-water surges, coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion. It therefore threatens coastal communities and key areas for food production and livestock breeding, thus endangering the livelihoods and assets of rural populations and agricultural producers. It also undermines the infrastructure of our countries and consequently affects our urban planning and the protection of our coastlines.

In our region, the Caribbean, and in particular the coastal region of the Dominican Republic, we are exposed to imminent land loss, which would lead to forced migration and displacement and the attendant social instability and demographic tension. The territorial consequences of rising sea levels could

therefore endanger international cooperation and generate conflict.

No region is exempt from the effects of sea level rise. Globally, it is estimated that sea level rise could increase up to 30 centimetres by 2050 and actually endanger the very survival and existence of nations. That could occur even sooner for other nations, such as Kiribati, which is less than two metres above sea level.

In the case of the Dominican Republic, sea level rise is estimated at 16 to 24 centimetres, which means the potential loss of 13 per cent of our territory by 2050. That alarming data is a threat to our territory, even more so because we do not have the necessary resources to address and mitigate the challenges of rising sea levels.

We would also like to reiterate that, as a consequence of climate change and rising sea levels, we cannot review or update the baselines and external limits or geographical coordinates of our maritime zones. Given that developing island States depend primarily on our maritime areas, any changes in that respect would undermine the peace and security of our countries. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, the cost of inaction in the face of climate change could cause annual losses estimated at \$22 billion by 2050, approximately 10 per cent of the current economy of the Caribbean.

Although our country is not a significant producer of greenhouse gases, the Dominican Republic is among the small island developing States (SIDS) that are exposed to those threats. According to studies and demographic data, the majority of the populations of Guyana, Haiti and our country, the Dominican Republic, live in low-lying lands. Similarly, since our economy depends on tourism, we cannot ignore the fact that as a sector, it is one of the most vulnerable to climate change and sea level rise. Other emerging risks that we in the Dominican Republic are currently living with include the massive amounts of seaweed that have reached our shores and have increased our vulnerability, limiting our ability to respond to threats such as sea level rise. It is therefore important that we develop a road map that covers all the implications of sea level rise and all issues related to sovereignty and maritime delimitations.

We must use the tools available to us to combat climate change and its impact on international peace and security. And ensuring the availability of resources to confront it is the only way to guarantee the sustainability

of our economies. The Dominican Republic is a member of the transitional committee overseeing the loss and damage fund recently established under the auspices of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The fund will address the needs of the most vulnerable countries resulting from damages and losses caused by climate change, and that will enable us to work on the fund's modalities and operationalization. We will also make a significant contribution as a member of the preparatory committee for the fourth annual International Conference on SIDS, to be held in the Caribbean region next year.

I would like to simply reiterate that the cost of inaction will be even greater for all countries if we do not act now.

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

Mr. Kelapile (Botswana): At the outset, let me congratulate and thank Malta's presidency of the Security Council for creating this timely opportunity for us to participate in today's open debate on the implications of sea level rise for international peace and security. I would also like to thank this morning's briefers for their important insights.

Botswana is definitely a landlocked country. While we do not face a direct threat from sea level rise, we are affected by other impacts of climate change within and beyond our borders. We therefore have a keen and legitimate interest in this important debate. We are also here to express our solidarity with all low-lying coastal communities and the small island developing States (SIDS), particularly the Pacific island countries, that through no fault of their own are increasingly facing a genuine existential threat from sea level rise with peace and security ramifications. We therefore welcome and fully support the Rising Nations Initiative, which was launched by the leaders of the Pacific atoll countries last year and aims to protect their statehood, preserve their sovereignty and safeguard the rights and heritage of the populations affected. Like the SIDS and the Pacific island countries, Africa contributes very little to global greenhouse-gas emissions, and yet we are suffering the greatest negative impacts. However, we are determined to adapt to the consequences of global warming and prevent further loss and damage to our people, environment, economies and cultural

heritage while also preventing climate-change-induced conflicts.

Over the past years, we in Africa have witnessed how climate-change-induced incidents, such as prolonged drought, flooding, cyclones and storms, have intensified. Their frequency has brought about hardship and devastation, including large-scale forced migration and displacement. Recent findings by the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative stress that the continent will see an increase in climate-forced migration and displacement over the coming decades, with internal displacement forecast to affect as many as 113 million people by 2050. Our subregion, Southern Africa, could also see an increase in cross-border mobility owing to the effects of climate change.

We all know that people have always moved to escape from harm and to adapt to changes in the environment. It is therefore important that we keep our focus on mitigating the climatic factors that drive such movements and not regard the people who move as a threat. That is why Botswana, under the leadership of President Mokgweetsi Masisi, has undertaken to play a champion role in issues relating to climate mobility data and information. In building on the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative and working closely with the Global Centre for Climate Mobility, we are embarking on a national deep-dive process to identify climate risk hotspots and develop a national blueprint for addressing climate mobility and advancing people-centred climate action. It is critical to ensure that responses from our continent and elsewhere are based on the best available data and information, including state-of-the-art forecasting and modelling capabilities, if we are to better anticipate and protect ourselves against climate risks. Botswana is therefore committed to leading from the front by putting people at the core of its response to the climate crisis. If we want to prevent further loss and damage from climate change, including its negative impacts on peace and security, people and Governments need to be able to better predict and prepare. Most people do not want to leave the places they call home, and they should not be forced to.

In that connection, existing commitments to ensuring climate adaptation financing and universal access to early-warning systems must be kept. Where there is no other option, we must help communities to move out of harm's way and direct investments towards areas of prospective settlement. Regional organizations should also support joint forecasting and planning

among their member States to address cross-border risks and harness opportunities associated with the movement and resettlement of people.

As I conclude, I should note that even if we manage those difficult transitions well, uprooting people and their culture and livelihoods involves a huge cost and carries substantive risks for States and social cohesion. In the interests of climate justice, the onus is on those who bear the primary responsibility for climate impacts, and on the international community as a whole, to face these issues head-on, including by providing adequate financing for the most vulnerable countries and communities. We must all live up to our obligations and responsibilities. For Africa and all communities in low-lying coastal areas — our brothers and sisters, especially in the SIDS and Pacific island countries — it is imperative that we act urgently and that we do so today.

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

Mr. Abesadze (Georgia): At the outset, let me express our appreciation to the presidency of Malta for convening this open debate on an important issue. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the other briefers for their comprehensive inputs.

Georgia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make some additional comments in my national capacity.

The relationship between climate change and peace and security is a complex one. Unfortunately, climate-change-related security risks have already become an everyday reality for many around the globe. According to the World Meteorological Organization's report, *WMO Provisional State of the Global Climate 2022*, extreme heatwaves, drought and devastating flooding affected millions and cost billions last year. Rising sea levels caused by global climate change increasingly put coastal and island communities under strain, in some cases threatening their very existence. Climate and weather extremes create risks of uncertainty and instability, including increasingly at the regional and international levels, driving displacement in all regions, with small island States disproportionately affected. Flood- and drought-related acute food insecurity and malnutrition are on the rise in many countries. What is even more worrisome is that

the risks posed by sea level rise to coastal ecosystems and populations are likely to increase tenfold well before the end of this century, if the adaptation and mitigation action agreed by the parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are not implemented.

As the tremendously fast-growing climate-security nexus increasingly influences the global peace and security context, addressing climate-related consequences and future risks has become a matter of global urgency and can be addressed only through joint and resolute action. We believe that addressing the security impacts of climate change should be at the core of the Security Council's conflict prevention agenda and should become a subject of in-depth analyses. In that context, we welcome the increased focus of the Security Council on climate change issues by broadening its discussions on the matter, incorporating climate security language into resolutions and establishing institutional architecture, such as the Climate Security Mechanism, the Group of Friends on Climate and Security and the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, in order to strengthen the Security Council's working agenda. We believe that assessments of climate-related security risks and responses to them should be further fed into the Council's work, including as a part of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement are the major international mechanisms for guiding global efforts in addressing climate change. In that regard, Georgia, as a party to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, has been committed to making its own contribution to international efforts to combat climate change. To underpin the Paris Agreement with concrete actions, the Government of Georgia has submitted an updated nationally determined contribution to the UNFCCC. The new nationally determined contribution has new targets, as required by the Paris Agreement, to be more ambitious. We are also working on a long-term low-emission development strategy for 2050, which will plan Georgia's long-term path towards climate change mitigation.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Georgia's commitment to do its utmost to reduce the implications of the climate crisis for international peace and security.

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

Ms. Seid (Palau): I deliver this statement on behalf of the 12 Pacific small island developing States (SIDS). We align our statement with those to be delivered by the representatives of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum.

We convey our gratitude to Malta for holding this debate on sea level rise and its implications for peace and security.

Climate change is no longer a novel concept in the Security Council's discussions — it has been discussed in various forms since 2007. Rising seas create a multitude of issues for all coastal States. However, they are an existential threat to low-lying and atoll islands throughout the Pacific. The Pacific SIDS led the discussions on the novel General Assembly resolution on climate change and its possible security implications, which was adopted in 2009 (General Assembly resolution 63/281). Rising sea levels have already flooded many of our coastlines and forced migration and displacement. They have intruded on our water tables, creating water insecurity and affecting our ability to grow crops and live healthily.

The risk of sea level rise to the Pacific islands is such that many of us have taken severe measures to address it. In Kiribati, former President Anote Tong introduced a “migration with dignity” strategy and purchased 5,500 acres in Fiji for supplementary food production in order to combat food insecurity and provide a potential location in which to resettle if sea level rise were to render Kiribati uninhabitable. Similarly, fearing total inundation, the nation of Tuvalu has launched an initiative to upload a virtual version of the country into the metaverse as a means to preserve the country and its culture. It sounds like science fiction — something we might see in a movie about some made-up disaster — but those are two real-life examples that are happening today.

But extreme measures are not only happening in SIDS. In the United States, the Biden Administration will pay \$75 million to three tribal communities in Alaska and Washington that have been severely affected by the effects of climate change for them to relocate to higher ground. The main difference here is that we, as small island developing States, do not have the fiscal space or in some cases the physical land mass to take those extreme adaptation measures. However, we also want to note that our identities as Pacific islanders

are grounded in our countries. Those are our homes and have been for thousands of years — paying for relocation is not a solution we can accept. We all need to do more to meet the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C. We propose four actions that the Council might undertake to address the risks related to sea level rise.

First, we reiterate our call for support as it relates to our maritime zones and the need to secure them, as well as the rights and entitlements that flow from them, without reduction, even in the face of rising sea levels. That position is reflected in the Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea Level Rise and the 2021 AOSIS Leaders' Declaration, which set out our position on how the rules on maritime zones under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea must apply in the situation of climate-change-related sea level rise.

Secondly, we ask for support for the initiative spearheaded by Vanuatu and supported by the Pacific Islands for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change.

Thirdly, we reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on climate change and security, who would inform the future work of the Council and the General Assembly.

Finally, we invite the Council to come to the Pacific to see sea level rise first-hand and hear the stories of those affected. We have said in previous debates that forced migration, displacement, food and water insecurity, and infrastructure damage are terms we often associate with war and conflict zones, but in the Pacific it is climate change that is the root cause of such threats to peace. While SIDS are on the front line of the crisis, 149 of the 193 United Nations Member States — 77 per cent of the United Nations membership — are exposed to sea level rise. Currently, approximately 634 million people worldwide are at risk owing to sea level rise, while a significant part of the world's population live in coastal areas. If we do not take steps to mitigate those risks, one can only imagine the enormity of the security issues we will face.

I thank you again, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. We call on Malta's leadership and all members of the Council to recognize the risks to peace and security associated with sea level rise and join with

the Pacific to find meaningful, proactive and effective solutions with urgency.

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

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): Latvia thanks Malta for organizing this important meeting on global climate action. We thank the briefers for their insightful presentations.

Latvia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union.

We often speak of the next generations that will suffer greatly from climate change, but we have to listen to science here — it might be our generation that needs saving first, and that might be sooner than we expected. Latvia, too, has identified sea level rise as a significant threat in its 2030 national plan for adaption to climate change, which was adopted in 2019. With the impacts of climate change increasing in occurrence and strength, such adaptation plans and measures will determine the resilience of countries and communities. It is necessary to urgently develop, update and implement adaptation strategies that are holistic and based on the best available science.

International cooperation has a crucial role to play in climate action. In the Baltic region, we pay special attention to regional cooperation, for instance within the Council of the Baltic Sea States. On a global scale, we fully support the ongoing work under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in scaling up climate action and enhancing the resilience of countries on the front lines of the climate crisis and facing the existential threat of sea level rise. In that regard, we look forward to the forthcoming report on the multidimensional vulnerability index. We also look forward to the holding of the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States and its preparatory process, which could also provide an opportunity to reflect on the topic from a sustainable development perspective. Latvia has put forward its candidacy to the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee and stands ready to contribute to the process.

Latvia is closely following the work of the International Law Commission's (ILC) Study Group on sea level rise in relation to international law. We have reflected upon it and provided our response during the yearly discussion of the ILC's report in the General Assembly's Sixth Committee. Sea level rise poses

significant questions about the suitability of established concepts and institutions of the international law of the sea, international human rights law and statehood law for addressing the interests of specially affected actors. While the way those questions are framed may be new, international law is not unfamiliar with the phenomenon of legally recognized and existing States having limited factual control over their territory, and the historical experience of the Baltic States gives us an informed perspective and sympathy for the arguments of States thus affected. Latvia is also looking forward to reading the materials of the third issues paper of the Study Group and its discussion by the ILC later this year.

With respect to the legal implications of sea level rise, we believe that international courts and tribunals play an important role in clarifying the rules that guide the conduct of States and other actors in dealing with the causes and implications of the climate crisis. We therefore express our appreciation for Vanuatu's historic initiative in requesting an advisory opinion on climate change from the International Court of Justice, as well as the request by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law for an advisory opinion from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Latvia will consider participating in those advisory proceedings to contribute to the development of international law.

It will be important to see the Security Council demonstrate its full flexibility so as to embrace the existing climate challenges and ensure that the impact of sea level rise is considered in a cross-cutting manner in its work, activities and mandates that can also enable a response to the specific threat of sea level rise itself. We regret that the important draft resolution S/2021/990, which framed the problem of climate change as a threat to international peace and security and was sponsored by a majority of the United Nations membership, failed to be adopted in 2021 owing to the veto of one permanent member of the Council (see S/PV.8926).

In conclusion, ambitious and urgent climate mitigation action continues to be the crucial element in managing climate risks and limiting sea level rise. Latvia is strongly committed to fulfilling its climate targets and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Additionally, we are currently working on the implementation of more ambitious 2030 greenhouse-gas emissions targets. Latvia encourages all countries to commit to more ambitious climate targets in their new and updated nationally determined contributions before the twenty-

eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Latvia recently contributed to the United Nations Development Programme Climate Promise, which helps countries reach their climate goals. As we continue to respond to the crises unfolding across the world, we must ensure that we build back better and greener for a sustainable, climate-resilient and peaceful future.

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

Mr. Hinton (Canada): We congratulate Malta on its presidency of the Security Council and commend it for selecting such an important topic for an open debate. We would also like to thank today's briefers.

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

Sea level rise is already threatening the lives and livelihoods of the 40 per cent of humankind who live in coastal communities. Additionally, as we speak, more than half a billion people around the globe live in low-lying areas, which are most at risk of intense flooding events and erosion. Sea level rise is also an urgent and existential threat for the citizens of small island States. For decades they have been raising the alarm about the threats that climate change poses for all of us. We have also seen that the effects of climate change and sea level rise disproportionately impact women, girls and indigenous and other historically disadvantaged, marginalized communities.

Lived experience and ideas for innovative solutions should be at the centre of our efforts. That work must be done hand in hand with an active commitment to supporting the meaningful participation of those worst affected in order to significantly address climate change and sea level rise. The Rising Nations Initiative, launched by Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, is an example of such positive action. We need to listen carefully, and we need to take action.

Canada is actively working in collaboration with international partners to foster resilience, especially in the most vulnerable areas. Such efforts cover the different stages of the consequences of rising sea levels, helping to prevent, mitigate and adapt to changes. They include ongoing financial and technical support to several initiatives, including the Canada-Caribbean Resilience Facility, a multi-donor partnership administered by the

World Bank to strengthen Caribbean States' resilience and ability to build back better in the wake of natural disasters; the CARICOM Climate Adaptation Fund, which contributes to insulating Caribbean Community member States from disaster risks; the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance, a multi-stakeholder alliance investing in coastal resilience with a focus on the global South; and lastly, the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative, which provides Pacific island countries with disaster-risk modelling and assessment tools.

(spoke in French)

While today's discussion focuses specifically on the effects of sea-level rise on international peace and security, we also want to acknowledge that the wider phenomenon of climate change is a threat multiplier for insecurity and conflict. Canada is working closely with its allies and partners and with multi-sectoral stakeholders to set up the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence. The new Centre of Excellence will help to identify and address the range and complexity of security risks posed by climate change. And we will continue to seek opportunities to do more.

As with other climate-change-related threats, sea level rise is a global, multigenerational challenge. We must all do our part to help address rising sea levels and take action together now to prevent, mitigate and adapt to their impact. At the same time, we must also raise public awareness about and work to directly address the implications of climate change and sea level rise on international peace and security. The Security Council should play a central role in those efforts.

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

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I would like to thank Malta for convening today's very important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and all of today's briefers for their excellent presentations.

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time. Its catastrophic consequences are multifaceted and global. It threatens lives and livelihoods and drives displacement. It is a risk multiplier that contributes to conflict and insecurity. It disproportionately impacts women and girls, people living with disabilities and marginalized groups. The science is clear — a series

of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have starkly outlined what the future holds if we do not act urgently. Climate change is an issue that the entire multilateral system must address if we are to mitigate and adapt to this crisis. Deepening the Security Council's understanding of the link between climate change and international peace and security was a key priority for Ireland during our recent term, and we will continue to draw attention to that connection at the United Nations. While we were naturally disappointed by the use of a solitary veto blocking the adoption of the draft resolution on climate and security (S/2021/990) led by Ireland and the Niger, it is clear that there is huge support for that agenda from all across the United Nations. It is essential for the Council to use the tools it has at its disposal to address the issue in delivering on its mandate.

As we have heard today, more than 600 million people live in low-lying coastal areas. They will be directly affected by sea-level rise, with many more impacted through the displacement of people, food insecurity and a lack of access to resources. As with so many of the critical issues we discuss at the United Nations, the impact of sea level rise will be disproportionately felt by people in low-lying areas and developing countries, particularly in small island developing States (SIDS).

As an island State, Ireland is very aware of the urgency of sea-level rise. We have worked with our SIDS partners to build resilience and amplify their voice in important multilateral forums. We are acutely aware of the need to address the specific vulnerabilities of SIDS. That is recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and a further important step will be to ensure that the international financial institutions are also able to take that deep vulnerability into account.

The legal aspects of the impact of sea level rise are also crucial. Further study of that area in relation to international law is timely in the light of the various unprecedented environmental challenges, particularly facing low-lying States and small island States. Ireland very much welcomes the fact that that topic is currently on the agenda of the International Law Commission (ILC). We will continue to engage on issues related to the law of the sea, statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea level rise. The ILC's work can play a role in examining important legal questions relevant to the challenges posed by sea level rise.

As other speakers noted today, in addressing the consequences of sea level rise, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea will clearly be a key consideration in any response. In that regard, Ireland reaffirms the universal and unified character of the Convention, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

In conclusion, Ireland wishes to again stress the importance of the Security Council addressing how climate change is affecting its ability to deliver on its mandate. Action now to deepen our understanding of how climate change is having an impact on insecurity and conflict is essential if we are to be able to respond effectively.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Mr. Humlegård.

Mr. Humlegård: It is my pleasure to address the Security Council on an issue of central importance to global security.

In the past years, extreme weather events caused widespread destruction, killed thousands of people and displaced millions. To quote from the statement made by Secretary-General António Guterres at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt: "Climate chaos is a crisis of biblical proportions. The signs are everywhere."

Millions of people live in vulnerable contexts, with low-lying island nations and coastal regions at risk of land loss. The immediate impacts may differ across regions and disproportionately strike the most vulnerable, but the climate crisis affects us all. The climate crisis is indeed a threat multiplier. Rising sea levels lead to resource scarcity and organized criminal groups exploiting them for profit. Climate-induced migration flows raise the demand for people-smuggling services. The increased frequency of natural disasters exacerbates local grievances and fuels conflict, terrorism, fragility and instability.

There is no one country or organization that can mitigate the implications of climate risks alone. Even so, law enforcement plays a crucial role in our collective response measures. Indeed, the global law enforcement community is at the front lines of protecting

communities and combating the criminal networks that exploit and fuel natural disasters to their advantage.

INTERPOL's environmental security programme and vulnerable communities programme have long been assisting its 195 member countries in tackling the climate-security nexus. Furthermore, effective international law enforcement cooperation will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and INTERPOL's complementary seven Global Policing Goals. For example, INTERPOL Global Policing Goal 3 addresses the protection of vulnerable communities. Global Policing Goal 7, on environmental security and sustainability, supports the implementation of 11 Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 13, on climate action.

Let us harness the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Policing Goals to work together so as to strengthen our capacity to investigate environmental crime, protect resource-dependent communities, build mechanisms to protect biodiversity and natural resources and disrupt organized crime networks and the profit element. Let this be a year of strengthened cooperation and renewed ambitions to secure a sustainable future for the next generations to come.

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

Mrs. Moote (Kiribati): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate, and we commend you for the theme that you chose. Kiribati welcomes the opportunity to provide its perspectives on the implications of sea level rise for international peace and security.

There is no doubt that our world is today experiencing the most significant changes in sea levels and climate extremes, so much so that even a marginal increase in sea level rise places the most vulnerable, particularly low-lying islands and coastal communities, at an immediate risk. In Kiribati, sea level rise, extreme weather events, increases in annual and seasonal temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns are some impacts of climate change that are constantly observed. No part of Kiribati's land rises more than three metres above sea level. With the changes in our climate system and with sea level rise, our islands are facing major and ongoing challenges. Besides eroding coastlines, food crops have been destroyed and the fresh-water lens, the source of our drinking water, contaminated by the intruding sea water.

While it is understood that sea level rise affects every Member State, what is often misunderstood is the discrepancy in its impact affecting the most vulnerable low-lying island nations, such as my country, Kiribati, and why urgent and effective mitigation and adaptation strategies stand as our only chance to address the risks posed by sea level rise. Rising seas and climate change remain the most destructive force, acting against not only the Government's efforts to improve the well-being of its increasing population, but also people's meaningful participation in our economy and in promoting peace.

Kiribati appreciates the Security Council's recognition of the importance of promoting climate adaptation and resilience through peacebuilding and climate financing. Similarly, the call on developed countries to double their provisions on climate finance to developing countries for adaptation from the 2019 levels by 2025 is an initiative worth considering and is particularly important to strengthening resilience measures for small island developing States and other developing countries with low-lying coastal areas.

To that end, we recommend that our partners and all members of the international community enhance their collective efforts to mobilize support and increase investments with regard to climate change. In that regard, the Security Council should invite non-Council members to brief them about the current situations in the most vulnerable regions, including the Pacific.

Kiribati recognizes the risks that climate change and sea level rise pose to maritime boundaries. We believe that such a risk may undermine our territorial integrity in the future if international law remains immobile in the face of dynamic changes. Kiribati believes that, once the delimitation of our maritime boundary is completed and submitted to the Secretary-General, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, maritime boundaries will remain permanent and that our baselines shall not be affected by climate-change-induced sea level rise.

The magnitude of the threat of sea level rise and its consequential implications warrant a holistic approach that builds synergies among the relevant stakeholders, be they national Governments, regional organizations or local actors at the national level. National and local actors are fundamental to achieving a real impact on the ground and to improving resilience in the face of climate change. We need to listen to their experiences

in implementing solutions and take into account and integrate traditional knowledge systems and solutions. We need to mobilize where progress has been limited. We also need to increase support and to strengthen preparedness and early warning initiatives, improving data gathering and monitoring on climate and sea level risks as key elements of adaptation. Forging an increased recognition of the social implications of climate change through social safeguards is essential. In addition, we must provide provisions for access to justice for victims of climate change under international law.

Through its 20-year vision, Kiribati is fully committed to building the resilience and adaptive capacity of its people. This 20-year road map and initiative, under the current President and Government, advocates self-development and the establishment of innovative strategic partnerships in order to sustainably transform this issue through international discourse describing our future as one sinking island. Kiribati's 20-year vision encourages the people of Kiribati to embrace development challenges, including climate change, and turn them into opportunities.

We therefore join like-minded States in calling for the immediate recognition of climate change and its social, security and humanitarian implications under international law.

Kiribati also believes that peace needs to exist in homes and communities first before it can be extended on a wider scale. That includes the protection and well-being of our families, women and children. Kiribati strongly believes that the international community, including the Security Council, must invest in women and girls in order to help alleviate the effects of sea level rise on sustainable peace. They have the voice and agency to withstand multiple hazards. In that respect, we need to advance gender-responsiveness in climate processes by ensuring that global knowledge is shared and provide platforms for both intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations to brief the Council on gender-responsive resilience policies. The Security Council should therefore consider a resolution that takes into account both the security implications of climate change, similar to the resolution proposed in 2021 and the foundations of resolution 1325 (2000).

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

Mr. Luteru (Samoa): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the Alliance

of Small Island States (AOSIS), the 39 small island developing States (SIDS) that are specially affected by the multiple and intersecting effects of climate change.

We thank the Malta presidency for convening this very important discussion. We recognize that it builds upon the work of many in the Council on the issues of climate change.

There is a litany of new examples of the sudden and slow-onset impact of climate change on small islands, from king tides, to super hurricanes, to the unstoppable and unprecedented rise in sea level. In the interest of time, we will not recite them here, not because they are not important, but rather because it is essential that we talk less and take more action in order to prevent and minimize the impacts of climate change going forward.

Turning to the questions proposed by the President, we would like to comment on a few of them.

The impact of climate change on SIDS will continue to be extraordinary. Our small land masses, populations, economies and remoteness mean that we have greater exposure to external economic and environmental shocks. Climate change will, without a doubt, pose an existential threat to our way of lives, potentially even to our economies and communities. But, to be clear, sea level rise resulting from anthropogenic climate change does not have an effect on our statehood or sovereignty.

We recall the AOSIS Leaders' Declaration of September 2021. In that Declaration, our leaders affirmed that there is no legal obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to keep baselines and the outer limits of maritime zones under review or to update charts or lists of geographic coordinates once deposited with the Secretary-General. Such maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them shall continue to apply without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate-change-related sea level rise. We are heartened to see that other States, including some of the largest coastal States, have adopted a similar understanding of international law, recognizing the need to ensure legal stability, security, certainty and predictability.

On the issue of statehood, we think that the past two centuries of State practice are abundantly clear. The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States is not relevant to the question of the continuation

of statehood. Rather, there is a fundamental presumption of the continuation of statehood in international law.

It would be inequitable and unjust to now suggest that, in the context of rising sea levels, we should strictly apply criteria developed in a regional agreement signed almost a century ago and ratified by 16 countries. Such criteria, in our view, do not apply to the continuation of States. We note that the potential loss of land territory by small islands due to sea level rise is not a natural but an anthropogenic phenomenon. To make an analogy, our land territory is being invaded as a result of the actions or inaction of other States. To now deprive us of our sovereignty is contrary to a century of State practice and our interpretation of the relevant law in this situation.

It would also constitute an unacceptable exertion of power by larger States, contrary to the principle of self-determination. It is our view that once a State is created by a people expressing their right to self-determination, through statehood, that statehood will cease only if another form of expression of the right to self-determination is explicitly sought and exercised by that people. That is the only determinant of whether a State should continue.

The protection of persons in the face of sea level rise is a global challenge that requires meaningful inter-State cooperation. That cooperation is not only a policy imperative, but also a legal obligation for every State. While cooperation is a legal obligation, it is also a matter of equity. AOSIS members are among the lowest emitters of the greenhouse gases that drive climate change and sea level rise, yet we face some of the most severe consequences of rising sea levels. To expect small island States to shoulder the burden of sea level rise, without assistance from the international community, would be the pinnacle of inequity.

More needs to be done. We attach great importance to discussions on the urgent need to fulfil international commitments, including on climate change and finance. We want to note, however, that the UNFCCC should remain the primary forum for discussions on climate change.

I again thank the President and the Government of Malta for convening this timely discussion. We look forward to continued collaborative discussion on how we confront this global scourge.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Marshall Islands.

Ms. Kabua (Marshall Islands): As a low-lying atoll island nation, I want to first congratulate Malta, a dear fellow island nation, on assuming the presidency of the Council and extend to it our appreciation for convening this important and critical debate.

We have repeatedly outlined not only the security implications of sea-level rise, but also action pathways well within the Council's mandate. This includes addressing traditional security benchmarks — forced displacement and resettlement between populations — and overall fragility, as well as unpacking complex issues concerning resilience and sovereignty itself. For atoll and low-lying island nations like my own, these are not sudden issues. We have considered these security implications since the earliest climate policy discussions.

The Security Council must spare no effort in seeking to build upon its presidential statement of 20 July 2011, in which the Council expressed “concern that possible security implications of loss of territory of some States caused by sea-level-rise may arise, in particular in small low-lying island States.” (*S/PRST/2011/15*, p. 2) Where the Council does not speak further, individual members can and must act. Many of the needed tools are already in front of the Council, and more focused action from the international system can be invited. What is needed most is the political will to start the job, supported by a United Nations special representative.

I would like to offer the Council the following three points.

First, the Council should take note of the ongoing action taken by the Marshall Islands and in concert with actions of Pacific Island Forum members regarding geo-referenced maritime boundaries. These boundaries are intended to preserve both stability and the legal definition of our unique regional characteristics, including our Pacific waters. Our own territorial integrity and sovereignty remain defined as state practice, even as we face severe threats, including sea level rise.

Secondly, it should address the importance of security and common state fragility in our Oceania region and encourage the United Nations system, including the Peacebuilding Fund, to strengthen engagement in supporting national structures for

security, including climate dimensions, and to spur further local community engagement. The international system can invite and encourage collective action in this regard between low-lying atoll nations, within regions and between small island developing States.

Thirdly, it should identify the scale of resilience and adaptation actions, including large-scale interventions, needed to reduce security risks from sea level rise inundation. As a practical matter, the Council can examine at least a baseline assessment and if are those actions being taken adequately, or why they are not.

Just because the questions are tough, or the nations concerned are remote and small, that is no reason for the Council to fail to take adequate action, particularly regarding a region that is now realizing wider geo-strategic engagement.

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

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): Kenya's delegation congratulates Malta on its assumption to the presidency of the Security Council during the month of February and for convening this debate on a matter of utmost urgency and importance.

The rising sea levels due to climate change present a real threat to state sovereignty and the very existence of nations, particularly small island developing States (SIDS). It is already creating environmental refugees, worsening socioeconomic crises, destroying coastal infrastructure and, generally, creating or worsening conditions for conflict. Clearly, any inaction and lack of ambition in addressing this global crisis will be extremely costly. We must marshal and direct all resources — human, institutional and financial — to a multisectoral and multipronged approach to climate action by the whole multilateral system, and this Council must be on board.

In this connection and as an affected coastal State, Kenya underscores the following four imperatives.

First, as the leading multilateral actor in the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council can shine an important light on sea level rise and its implications for conflict. At a minimum, this will encourage all stakeholders to act with more urgency and ambition as the issue rises on the list of global priorities.

Secondly, the Security Council must recognize the climate and peace and security nexus, and in so doing, can incorporate climate adaptation and mitigation measures in all its work, including peacekeeping and special political mandates, and ensure their faithful implementation.

Thirdly, we must build upon the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which is the centre of environmental multilateralism. We need to tap into UNEP's work across the fields of science, policy and technology, to better coordinate our collective action for climate resilience and green economies.

Fourthly, ultimately, to slow down sea level rise, all — and especially industrialized countries — must drastically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to achieve their Paris Agreement targets. They must also, in line with their commitments, provide support to developing countries, including small island developing States, to build their resilience and adaptation in the face of the climate crisis.

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

Mr. Massari (Italy): I would like to thank Malta for convening this debate and the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, Minister Aurescu and Director Pasisi for their interventions.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union and with that to be delivered by Nauru, on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

Today's debate gives us the opportunity to point out why sea level rise represents a threat to international peace and security, enabling us to define a common strategy for this specific aspect of the climate-security nexus. We need to raise awareness on the existential threat posed by sea level rise, which can lead to the permanent submergence of land and the disappearance of entire coastal areas across the world. Extreme sea levels are also causing more frequent flooding, loss of ecosystems and salinization of soils.

As a direct consequence, the very survival of many small island developing States is at risk, while other climate-vulnerable countries are experiencing damage to their infrastructure and losses in their industries. Poverty, food insecurity, a scarcity of resources, displacement and immigration are also linked to sea level rise in many coastal areas. Those factors

combined are key drivers of conflict and a threat multiplier, endangering peace and security not only in the States most affected but also at the regional and global levels. We therefore believe that every organ of the United Nations should take coordinated multilateral action to address the adverse implications of climate change. That would help both Member States and regional organizations in stepping up their climate action to fulfil their international commitments. By the same token, the Security Council should tackle the accompanying security implications, such as those resulting from sea level rise.

Mitigation and adaptation should be further integrated into the formulation of mandates for United Nations peacekeeping missions. As the co-Chair, with Bangladesh, of the Group of Friends Leading on Environmental Management in the Field, Italy is engaged in shaping solutions that can enable peace operations to perform in a sustainable way. Financial support is also critical. In that regard, we welcome the investments of the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund in support of building and sustaining peace in relation to the effects of climate change. We should also continue to address the legal implications of rising sea levels. Italy commends the Study Group of the International Law Commission for its work, while recalling the centrality of the legal framework enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In conclusion, it is our hope that the Security Council will continue to address the threats posed by sea level rise.

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

Mr. Tōnē (Tonga): It is a pleasure to join everyone today for this important event. I am pleased to be making these remarks on behalf of the member States of the Pacific Islands Forum that have a presence at the United Nations. We continue to endorse this open debate, with a focus on the implications of sea level rise for international peace and security, a topic well suited to the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Climate change remains the single greatest existential threat facing the Blue Pacific, and in 2022, Pacific leaders declared a climate emergency in our region. Indeed, climate-change-related sea level rise is a threat multiplier for our people on many levels. The international community will have to address important

questions, including in relation to statehood, maritime zones, rights and entitlements.

A major step that should be taken to safeguard international peace and security in the face of climate-change-related sea level rise is the preservation and maintenance of our maritime zones established in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Through their groundbreaking Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise, Pacific leaders reaffirmed the threats of climate change and sea-level rise as the defining issue imperilling the livelihoods and well-being of our peoples and undermining the full realization of a peaceful, secure and sustainable future for our region.

Our leaders proclaimed that our maritime zones, and the rights and entitlements that flow from them, will continue to apply without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate-change-related sea level rise. The Declaration emphasizes the primacy and centrality of UNCLOS, which itself was adopted as an important contribution to the maintenance of peace, justice and progress for all peoples. Importantly, the Declaration is also rooted in the principles of legal stability, security, certainty and predictability that underpin the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We welcome statements from States and organizations endorsing the Declaration and once again extend our call to the rest of the international community to join them. We also strongly support and endorse the work of the International Law Commission (ILC) in its current study of the topic of sea level rise in relation to international law.

Next month, from 27 to 30 March, our region will assemble to unpack the complex legal issues created by sea-level rise and its implications for statehood and the protection of the people it affects. This represents our region's concerted effort to contribute meaningfully to the important work of the ILC's second issues paper (A/CN.4/752), because the issues it addresses are of critical importance to the future of our people as they face the growing threats to their welfare, safety and security posed by rising sea levels. We welcome the work of the Security Council in supporting these efforts and taking relevant concrete measures. We stand ready to provide the necessary support, including by sharing information on matters raised today. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General for climate

change and security, who would inform the work of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Rai (Papua New Guinea): At the outset, I would like to pay special tribute to the Maltese presidency of the Council for the month of February in organizing today's timely and much-needed meeting, and also to thank our briefers. The Council's engagement on this topical issue is welcome and should be further encouraged.

Sea level rise is one of the effects of the global warming caused by human-induced greenhouse-gas pollution of the Earth's atmosphere. The science is clear, as highlighted by the 2022 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which in part notes that some coastal communities in the tropics have lost entire coral-reef ecosystems that once helped sustain their food security and livelihoods. Others have been forced to leave low-lying neighbourhoods and cultural sites as sea levels rise. The significant adverse effects that sea level rise has on lives and livelihoods in coastal and island communities include coastal erosion, saltwater contamination of the soil and drinking water, more powerful storm surges, extensive flooding, uninhabitable land and the dislocation and displacement of peoples and entire communities. In my own country, Papua New Guinea, the ominous march of the rising sea levels in our outer small islands and coastal communities continues to worsen and is a serious concern. Low-lying Pacific atoll nations are facing a grave existential risk. Rising sea levels are also a potential trigger for conflicts and tensions over the use of limited resources between displaced and dislocated persons and their new communities. That is why we have made it a priority to address this issue through our regional efforts now and going forward.

Our lived reality is that rising sea levels pose a serious threat to our sustainable development, security and well-being. The results of sea level rise for communities and countries are devastating and often irreversible, and the losses and damages will only increase as global temperatures continue to rise. That is why we are urging the Security Council to effectively address non-traditional security issues such as this. In our view, the Council's preventive role, as provided for in Article 1, paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, is instructive in this context.

The Council must not wait until it is too late to act on issues that have serious implications for international peace and security, such as sea level rise and the climate-security nexus. We therefore strongly support the International Law Commission's ongoing work on addressing sea level rise in relation to international law. The Security Council would do well to draw on the Commission's important work.

A key concern for Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region is the importance of the protection of persons displaced by sea level rise. The duty of international cooperation, which is well recognized in international law, must be operationalized to address that human rights and humanitarian issue. Another crucial but related issue for us concerns maritime zones under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We therefore join the call for attention to the Pacific Islands Forum's Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise, issued by our leaders in August 2021, about which Pacific small island developing States and the Pacific Forum Chair spoke earlier. Another serious implication posed by sea level rise is the fundamental issue of sovereignty, particularly for countries that may in future be submerged by the ocean. We strongly believe that existing statehood cannot be extinguished by sea level rise, as a matter of international law. That cannot be taken for granted.

Noting the nexus between sea level rise and climate change and their security implications for global peace and security, we urge Council members to be proactive, based on evidence and science, in order to better account for today's realities while respecting their mandate, as provided for under the Charter of the United Nations. We also call on those Council members who continue to question the nexus between climate change and security to be realistic about the perils that climate change poses to international peace and security. In Papua New Guinea's view, the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has an important role to play in the climate-security nexus. We join others in reiterating the call for the appointment of a special representative on climate and security, who could serve as a focal point for the climate-security nexus in the United Nations system.

In conclusion, Papua New Guinea wishes to associate itself with the statements made by the representatives of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance

of Small Island States and of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Gonzato.

Mr. Gonzato: The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the potential candidate country Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Climate change, with sea level rise being a direct consequence thereof, is a core driver of conflict and a risk multiplier. As explained by previous speakers, sea level rise poses substantial threats to many coastal States, including small island developing States. For that reason, we would like to thank Malta for further advancing the importance of the climate-security nexus on the agenda of the Security Council. We also thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the other briefers for their insights.

To minimize those threats, a joined-up approach on the part of the international community as a whole is necessary. It is also important to adopt a whole-of-society approach that includes all stakeholders, especially women and young people. Partnerships with regional and subregional organizations are equally important in that regard. It is timely and urgent that the Security Council take up its role in addressing the adverse effects of climate change on peace and security. It should also systematically integrate climate-related security issues, where appropriate, in its resolutions and should continue to work towards adopting a comprehensive approach to tackling the security concerns of climate change, including through reconsidering the adoption of a resolution on climate change and security. Moreover, it should consider the creation of the position of special representative on climate and security.

We acknowledge that the United Nations climate and security mechanism contributes to enhanced coordination, integrated analysis and education within the United Nations system. The establishment of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security is also an important tool that can help the Security Council react to threats of climate change. We further welcome the Secretary-General's announcement on early warning systems. In that regard, the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems initiative saves lives, assets and livelihoods by providing increased access to early weather warnings and risk information for

people in least developed countries and small island developing States.

The International Law Commission (ILC) is currently examining the topic "Sea level rise in relation to international law" in three main areas: the law of the sea, statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea level rise. We stand ready to support that process. Any responses to the consequences of that slow-onset phenomenon should ensure the preservation of stability and security in international relations, including legal stability and security. In accordance with the ILC's mandate, such responses need to be in line with and respect the legal framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which reflects customary international law. UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and establishes mandatory mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The European Union (EU) takes an integrated approach to climate change and security in its external action, including through crisis responses and conflict management. As the world's biggest contributor of climate finance and a major humanitarian donor, we support disaster-risk reduction, anticipatory action, adaptation and mitigation efforts. For example, through the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, we support more than 140 programmes conducted by African, Caribbean and Pacific States and regional institutions to implement disaster-risk reduction activities. As the current chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, we aim to strengthen efforts to address the challenge of population displacement prompted by disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. Through the EU Global Climate Change Alliance Plus initiative, we have funded more than 80 adaptation programmes in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Finally, we supported the establishment of new funding arrangements responding to loss and damage at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Thomas (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community

(CARICOM), for which sea level rise poses an existential threat.

Peace and security in the Caribbean region is progressively being decimated by sea level rise. Our economic viability, health, well-being and cultural and social way of life are all under threat, as are the development gains achieved over the years. Historically, sea level rise was merely seen as one of the main effects of climate change, dating back to the early years of the climate negotiations. Today, however, the absence of concrete, collective action on climate change has made sea level rise a devastating and crippling reality for many of our countries. The flat, low-lying topography and porous limestone bedrock of the Caribbean basin make our region especially vulnerable to sea level rise, with the best available science predicting a very grim reality in the not-too-distant future. The retreat of our coastlines affects vital ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as the lives, livelihoods and communities that rely on them. The effects of sea level rise globally can therefore exacerbate the vulnerability of populations, especially those already in situations of armed conflict, violence or fragility, and whose capacity to cope with climate shocks and changes is limited.

That leads us to the ongoing international debate on sea level rise in relation to the law of the sea, statehood and the protection of persons. CARICOM aligns itself with the following positions of the Alliance of Small Island States.

First, on the law of the sea, there is no obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to keep the baselines and outer limits of maritime zones under review or to update charts or lists of geographical coordinates once they have been deposited with the Secretary-General. Moreover, such maritime time zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them shall continue to apply without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate-change-related sea level rise.

Secondly, with regard to statehood, there is a fundamental presumption of the continuation of statehood in international law. The potential loss of land territory by small islands because of sea level rise is not a natural phenomenon, but is anthropogenic in cause. Sea level rise therefore does not affect our peoples' ability to express their right to self-determination through statehood. That would be grossly inequitable and unjust.

Thirdly, regarding the protection of persons, there is a legal duty of cooperation, which establishes an obligation for the international community to assist the States that are most affected by sea level rise, which includes the CARICOM States.

It should also be noted that our region is doing its utmost to prevent assaults on our peace and security by sea level rise through climate change adaptation actions. That is done to the greatest extent possible with the limited resources at our disposal. Nevertheless, there are limits to what we, as a region, can adapt to.

As an international community, we must simultaneously plan and organize a system to address the inevitable loss and damage, which are uprooting our peace and security. That calls on us to provide equitable solutions that are in line with countries' international obligations and rights to address in a systemic manner difficult issues, such as climate change displacement, including the treatment of climate refugees. Having a truly international plan and system for addressing such climate-change-related disrupters to international peace and security will allow for its continued maintenance.

Going forward, we urge the Security Council to work closely with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by inputting into a coordinated approach to address this common concern of humankind and to give adequate attention to the humanitarian consequences of climate-related security risks. Our CARICOM region will continue its pursuit for climate justice, and we call on the international community to assist in protecting our peace and security.

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

Mr. Falefou (Tuvalu): Let me first thank the briefers for their statements. I also thank Malta for having convened this open debate.

I stand here today as a living reminder that the issues being discussed are central to the lives and livelihoods of my people. The impacts of sea level rise, its implications and its consequences are not just ideas or statistics that are read out in statements. For Tuvalu and many of our fellow small islands and developing countries, those are the realities that we face every day. For us, the threats that sea level rise represent to our sovereignty and statehood are not hypothetical. The extensional threat that we face is real. It is forecast that

this century, several Pacific island nations, including my own, Tuvalu, will lose considerable territory to the rising sea level, with some becoming completely uninhabitable. We are facing the complete inundation of our land by seawater.

The Charter of the United Nations and our current international system are founded on the fundamental principles of territorial integrity. Yet, for us, that is being eroded on an epic scale. How are our people to preserve their heritage, culture and rights? What obligations are owed towards our protection and the safeguarding of our sovereignty?

We are not contributing at all to the current climate crisis. The Pacific islands, as a whole, account for less than 0.03 per cent of the world's current total carbon emissions, far less in terms of historical emissions. Yet we are the ones at the forefront of the impending climate disaster. We are already facing the terrible consequences of sea level rise. Rising sea water has penetrated and contaminated our groundwaters, causing crops and vegetation to die. We are losing precious coral, which supports the marine life that provides our daily protein consumption and ensures our overall food security. Higher tides are increasing the intensity of the storms that we face, devastating our homes and fields. Our young people and families are being forced to move, with some leaving and our communities drifting apart. That is today, and the situation is only going to get worse.

Tuvalu and our Pacific brothers and sisters have been raising alarm bells in international forums for several years now. We are deeply grateful for the support of many countries, the representatives of some of which spoke today on this critical topic, which is a serious security concern for us. This morning, we heard speaker after speaker raising the threat posed by rising sea level and asking what should be done. The Secretary-General also asked for innovative legal and practical solutions to address its impact on the very existence of the land territory of some countries.

Let me put forward Tuvalu's views on what is needed, as outlined by my Prime Minister, the Honourable Kausea Natano. Apart from the urgent efforts to address such issues within climate change mitigation and adaptation, we need a global settlement that guarantees nation States, such as mine, a permanent existence beyond the inhabitable life of our actual homes — one that recognizes and protects our

cultural integrity, our human and economic capital and our sovereignty.

As our briefer Ms. Pasisi, Director of Climate Change of the Pacific Community, said so eloquently this morning, any solution must be jointly created and enacted with the peoples and Governments of island nations, not visited upon us by others. To achieve that, we urgently need a global dialogue that acknowledges the realities and rights of the States Members of the United Nations that face an existential threat from rising sea level.

Tuvalu and other countries are already taking important steps. The Pacific islands are pressing for action in international legal forums and processes. We initiated the Future Now project in 2021 to take a proactive stance for Tuvalu amid climate change. Last year, at an event on the sidelines of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, Prime Minister Natano and President Kabua of the Marshall Islands launched the Rising Nations Initiative to fill the current gaps in awareness, the legal framework and political commitment and bring the international community together to support our push for a global solution. I therefore count on everybody's support in taking action now. We cannot wait any longer.

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

Ms. Rodríguez Mancia (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of Malta for convening this open debate on a particularly relevant topic, given the fact that sea level rise directly affects more than 70 States, which is to say more than a third of the international community. As we all well know, the phenomenon is already having a growing impact on many vital aspects of life for coastal areas, low-lying coastal States and small island States, especially for their populations. Another fairly large group of States is also likely to be indirectly affected, for example by the displacement of populations, a lack of access to resources or threats to food security. Sea level rise has become a global phenomenon and therefore creates problems that affect the international community as a whole. The phenomenon of climate change and its negative impact are undeniable realities. We must address the issue as a threat to international peace and security. If we delay or fail to take firm and immediate action, there will be devastating long-term consequences.

The Charter of the United Nations calls on us to promote international economic and social cooperation to ensure the highest possible standards of living, universal respect for human rights and peaceful solutions to international economic and social issues. That is the principle that should guide Member States in taking action to resolve those issues, in accordance with the principle of sovereign equality among States and their national legal systems. Sea level rise can potentially lead to tensions in relations among States, which is when the Security Council should exercise the primary role assigned to it by Chapter VI of the Charter by urging the parties concerned to settle such disputes peacefully, including through forums such as the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. In that regard, the Council should focus on conflict prevention and resolution by peaceful means, based on scientific evidence, which should also include increased cooperation with the Economic and Social Council in addressing such problems. In exceptional cases, the Security Council is duty-bound to resort to Chapter VII when such disputes threaten to breach the peace.

International cooperation efforts should include assistance and capacity transfer to developing countries, including island States, so that they can address their adaptation needs in the face of the effects of climate change. Sea level rise leads to flooding in low-lying coastal areas and islands. Guatemala is cognizant of the consequences that such events may have within the context of the law of the sea and the sovereignty of States. We therefore urge States to continue their cooperation with the International Law Commission to clarify how the international legal regime can respond to such situations. In that regard, it is important to ensure that the international legal order can provide States with an adequate level of certainty and stability where their respective sovereign rights are concerned, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We also stress the importance of preventive measures and regional action, an example of which is the Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative, which promotes a regional vision and road map for collecting data, modelling future climate mobility, holding consultations and developing a common action agenda.

In conclusion, Guatemala reiterates its commitment to the Charter. It is critical that we immediately address

the consequences of climate change, and we must take decisive action before it is too late.

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

Mr. Dvornyk (Ukraine): We thank the Maltese presidency for convening this important debate, and we would like to thank all the briefers for their comprehensive presentations.

Ukraine has always been a promoter of intensified and concerted action aimed at addressing climate change as a global threat to international peace and security. In particular, in April 2017, during its term as an elected member of the Security Council from 2016 to 2017, Ukraine organized an Arria Formula meeting on the security implications of sea level rise. It is well known that rising sea levels undermine the viability of low-lying regions around the world that lack higher areas as well. Small island developing States will be particularly affected by rising sea levels that will inevitably undermine the prospects for their future existence. As much as 73 per cent of island States will face increasingly dry conditions by the middle of the century as rising sea levels swallow up their coastlines. It is not just a matter of climate but of those countries' own security and of global security more broadly. The displacement of people, the destruction of critical infrastructure and the changes in coastlines caused by sea level rise are particularly worrisome in regions that are already experiencing political and socioeconomic tensions, and they may result in additional or heightened threats to peace and security.

At the same time, climate-induced sea level rise is mostly a slow-onset event that provides individual Member States and the United Nations in general with significant time to prepare and respond. It is therefore alarming that Russia's aggressive behaviour has been multiplying conflicts and thereby undermining our ability to concentrate on resolving existing global threats. It reveals the interlinkages within the global security architecture, as the Russian invasion of Ukraine has affected the world's ability to efficiently address climate-related threats. The war has also aggravated the world food crisis, affecting mostly countries suffering from current effects of climate change, especially catastrophic droughts and large-scale flooding. It means that as soon as a comprehensive just and lasting peace in Ukraine, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, is achieved, our concerted actions

to combat global threats such as climate change, and to protect countries exposed to sea level rise, will be more efficient and targeted.

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

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, for presiding over the open debate this morning. I am grateful to the Permanent Mission of Malta, and the Maltese presidency of the Security Council for this month, for convening a debate on such an increasingly important issue, as the negative consequences of climate change continue and may impact international peace and security. We would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, President Kőrösi of the General Assembly and the other briefers for their comprehensive statements.

The links between sea level rise and international peace and security are complex and interconnected. The continuing rise in sea levels is creating challenges that may threaten the political, economic and security stability of societies and thereby lead to conflicts. Moreover, rising sea levels have the potential to force the collective migration of local communities and could strain resources in countries hosting them, increasing tensions and creating instability.

In that context, the United Nations and its Member States have a critical role to play in addressing that global challenge. Rising sea levels require collective and concerted efforts nationally and internationally in order to mitigate their effects and prevent their likely consequences for international peace and security. We should also find sustainable solutions for all.

As an island state, the Kingdom of Bahrain believes that climate change represents a global challenge that requires global solutions. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Issa Al Khalifa, we placed the principle of sustainable development at the core of our national strategy, particularly through the 2030 Bahrain Economic Vision.

At the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Glasgow, United Kingdom, and Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, respectively, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, reaffirmed

the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to reaching carbon neutrality by 2060. To that end, we adopted a set of short-term goals to reduce emissions by 30 per cent by 2035 through carbon reduction initiatives, direct investment in carbon-capture technologies, and measures to enhance energy efficiency and multiply renewable energy sources.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also conducted the necessary studies to assess the impact of sea level rise on coastal areas. We have developed a long-term plan commensurate with the scale of the challenges at hand and the nature of the priority areas to be protected. The Kingdom of Bahrain is keen to exchange best practices in the field of environmental affairs and climate change, in which we are utilizing all available resources to bolster joint efforts and seek out opportunities and advanced solutions to ensure climate security, in line with the aspirations of the countries of the world and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain underscores the importance of harnessing all capabilities and the exchange of experiences and best practices in order to contribute to tackling climate change, which constitutes a global challenge that may have dire consequences for international peace and security.

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

Mrs. Debye (Nauru): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security — a broad and diverse group of more than 60 States from all regions of the world.

On behalf of the Group, let me first congratulate Malta on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and extend our appreciation for the convening of this open debate on the important topic of sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security.

Sea level rise, fuelled by climate change, poses a substantial threat to island nations and coastal communities around the world. An average sea level rise of 25 to 58 centimetres along the coastlines of island States is predicted already by the middle of this century. Depending on various temperature scenarios, it is estimated that between 130 million and half a billion people live in areas that will be submerged in the long run. That will be devastating, particularly for

small island developing States, in which one third of the population live 5 metres above sea level.

To contain that threat, it is essential that the global community accelerate its efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change and keep a 1.5°C limit on temperature rise within reach. To that end, States must take ambitious actions in their implementation of the Paris Agreement and the decisions under that Agreement, including the Glasgow Climate Pact and the Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan. Measures must also be taken to fast-track women's full, equal and meaningful participation in preventing and addressing climate-affected conflicts in relation to sea level rise. We also need to enhance efforts to contain the security consequences of rising sea levels through initiatives aimed at increasing the resilience of States to climate change, in particular with regard to disaster-risk reduction. As such, we welcome the Secretary-General's announcement on early warning systems.

It is agreed by all that climate change is causing a multidimensional crisis with repercussions for sustainable development, including climate-related displacement, food security and growing inequalities, all of which increase the risk of conflict and, prospectively, inter-State tensions. We need to recognize the links between climate change, energy security, forced displacement, peacebuilding, human security, development, gender inequality and the protection of human rights. Recognizing the multidimensional relationship between climate change and peace is crucial for developing effective and sustainable responses to the challenges posed to peacebuilding. In that regard, we stress the importance of the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund investments in support of building and sustaining peace in relation to the implications of climate change.

In particular, we welcome the collaboration between the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the first climate security project in the Pacific. The project represents the first multi-country initiative of its kind in the Pacific region, proposing concrete assessments and actions at all levels to tackle climate-related security risks. Similarly, in Africa, the IOM has been working together with the World Bank and other bodies in the United Nations system, as well as regional partners, on the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative. The Initiative is evidence-based and aimed at generating

political momentum around a common policy agenda and mobilizing resources for the implementation of comprehensive and locally anchored solutions to address climate mobility and displacement. That is a good practice that could be implemented in other contexts.

We have repeatedly — and I mean repeatedly and repeatedly — called for the following to be considered: first, regular reporting by the Secretary-General on the security implications of climate change; secondly, the appointment of a special representative on climate insecurity, who could improve the ability of the United Nations to address climate-related security risks; thirdly, climate-sensitive prevention, mediation and peacebuilding and the inclusion of women in those processes; fourthly, training for all relevant United Nations personnel on the implications of climate change on peace and security and humanitarian crises; and fifthly, enhanced cooperation with civil society, regional and national actors.

The entire United Nations system must address that challenge in all relevant forums and with all relevant mandates. The Climate Security Mechanism is a laudable example of inter-agency cooperation, strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to analyse and address the adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security. We encourage all Member States to continue to support and engage with the Climate Security Mechanism. We welcome the Secretary-General's call for an increased focus on the effects of climate change on peace and security in his report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), and we ask the Security Council to take on our suggestions to help drive action to address the security implications of climate change and resulting sea level rise.

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

Mr. Ousman (Niger) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Niger, I wish to congratulate Malta for organizing this important debate on the implications of sea level rise for international peace and security. We are heartened to see that more and more Council members are placing the security implications of climate change on the agenda during their Council presidencies. That is a sign of the growing interest in the topic and allows us to engage in frank discussions on the facts of such a pressing issue.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and all the other speakers for their inspiring briefings this morning.

In line with the joint initiative of Ireland and the Niger of December 2021 (see S/2021/990), we remain of the view that the adoption of a resolution on the security risks of climate change will strengthen the capacity of the Security Council to better understand and address that phenomenon, within its mandate, and enable it to take informed action to address those risks. That would include improved data collection, monitoring and analysis of the effects of climate change in the context of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies.

Climate change is already reshaping our world. In Africa, climate shocks and sea level rise are already causing loss and damage, forcing people to abandon their homelands and livelihoods in search of safer land and new income opportunities.

The arid and semi-arid countries of the Sahelian belt and the Horn of Africa are among the most vulnerable regions of the African continent. Increasing climate risks in a warming world threaten to further undermine our infrastructure, agriculture and our peoples' livelihoods. Pastoralists, fishing communities and small farmers are among the most vulnerable groups, leading to conflicts over access to and control of increasingly scarce natural resources. By 2050, climate-related impacts are expected to increase the numbers of people moving to rapidly growing African cities, many of which are in vulnerable coastal areas, especially in West Africa. To avoid uncontrolled movements that expose people to new risks, populations and communities facing climate stressors must be provided with the information and resources that they need to make informed decisions concerning if, when and where to move.

That is why in building on the continental efforts of the African Climate Mobility Initiative, the Government of the Niger will work closely with the Global Centre for Climate Mobility to conduct an in-depth national analysis of the migration dynamics that are triggered by climate change in our country. The goal is to develop a master plan to integrate climate mobility into the Niger's adaptation and development plans. Thanks to our unique geographic location and experience in hosting refugees and managing our own internally displaced people in recent years, the Niger now finds itself called on to play a major role in the quest for

solutions to the consequences of climate disruption in the Sahel. That is why, at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, President Mohamed Bazoum pledged to act as a champion of climate mobility and work with other States that are similarly affected to encourage the international community's attention and support to the issue. And we see ourselves standing in solidarity with the States and peoples of the Pacific islands who are facing existential threats related to those issues.

Climate change is a threat multiplier for States and social cohesion, including in Africa. We have seen the cross-border effects that result from States' vulnerabilities and the risks posed to human and regional security in our neighbourhood. But while climate change does have implications for international security, it is first and foremost a threat to the security and the well-being of the people and communities most affected. We must therefore prioritize the development needs and aspirations of our people and protect them with adequate investments in climate adaptation. In the interests of international peace and security, we cannot fail that test and lose the trust of the public. We have an opportunity to build resilience in Africa and other regions that are vulnerable to climate change, but the window for delivering on that promise is closing rapidly. It is therefore high time that the promises made to developing countries were kept.

Let us work together to put people at the heart of our collective response to the climate crisis. Every organ of the United Nations, including the Security Council, has a role to play in that fight.

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

Ms. Hussain (Maldives): I would like to thank Mr. Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, for convening today's important debate during Malta's presidency of the Council for the month of February. I would also like to thank the eminent experts for providing us with valuable insights in their briefings earlier today.

I align my statement with that delivered by the representative of Samoa as the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States.

I was just nine years old back then, but I vividly remember that day — the day the surge of tidal waves

inundated my island and flooded my house. My father was desperately piling sacks of sand to prevent more water from entering our home. I remember being very scared, thinking to myself that my home, my island, was sinking. That was in 1987, when king tides inundated much of our capital city, Malé, causing extensive damage. Of course, it was a time when climate change and its science were very much in their infancy. However, the floods in Malé gave credence to the growing belief in the links between greenhouse-gas emissions, rising global temperatures and consequent sea level rise. It would soon become increasingly clear that the world was facing a serious environmental challenge and one that leaves low-lying islands among the most vulnerable areas.

In response, the Government of the Maldives initiated an emergency conference on the issue of sea level rise, inviting 14 ministers from small island States, as well as scientists and observers. It was the first meeting of its kind highlighting the threats that global warming and sea level rise pose to small islands and signalling the unequivocal need for the broadest possible international cooperation to manage the impending crisis. Ultimately, it was that early conference that culminated in the establishment of the Alliance of Small Island States. Looking back, it is astonishing, and in some ways depressing, that more than 30 years later we are still negotiating and discussing the issue of the implications of sea level rise and what needs to be done.

Today all of humankind is standing on the precipice of a triple planetary crisis — the interlinked issues of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss — which, if left to its own devices, could destabilize the Earth's systems. That is a sentiment that echoes the very essence of a recent Earth Commission presentation, which took place at the World Economic Forum last month. While 80 per cent of our islands are a metre above sea level and 50 per cent of all our housing structures are within just 100 metres of the coastline, rising sea levels and extreme weather events pose serious threats to the very existence of small island States such as mine, the Maldives. The sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has made it amply evident that low-lying islands, including the Maldives, are particularly vulnerable to the cumulative and cascading risks of climate events. But while we may be a small country, our size has not hindered our resolve and might in being

a defined voice in climate advocacy among Member States, especially in the time since the Security Council held its first debate on security and climate, almost 16 years ago (see S/PV.5663). Most recently, in 2019 our Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, reminded the Council that a rise in sea levels of two metres would submerge the Maldives in its entirety (see S/PV.8451).

My delegation would like to highlight that human activity has contributed to abrupt and large-scale changes in our planet's systems. The scientific data and evidence are abundantly clear that the effects of climate change on our oceans and their biodiversity will continue to worsen. It is therefore incumbent on policymakers to heed the planetary boundaries framework that scientists and experts have called for. The IPCC anticipates that sea levels could rise by approximately half a metre by 2100 even if greenhouse-gas emissions are sharply reduced, or up to one full metre if those emissions continue to increase. That scenario suggests that low-lying coastal areas such as the Maldives could become uninhabitable by 2050. That is 27 years from now. That will mean losing a culture, a way of life, homes and livelihoods built over many generations. At the societal level, climate change will have a cascading impact on food, water and health security and exacerbate gender inequalities. That is the sobering reality we are speaking about — losing our country and our very identity, effectively rendering us stateless. Climate change is our number-one security threat.

That is why the Maldives and other small island developing States have consistently reminded the international community of the importance of limiting the Earth's warming to 1.5°C. That is why we continue to urge the international community to raise its ambitions and match its actions to that goal.

It is disappointing to hear, despite the grave circumstances of climate risk, opposition to recognizing or enhancing the role of the Security Council in addressing the peace and security threats related to climate change, especially since the Council has already established that climate change has contributed to conflicts, particularly in resolutions 2349 (2017), 2561 (2021) and 2576 (2021). Those resolutions underscore what we know to be true — that climate change can and has contributed to conflict and insecurity. The Security Council's mandate is clear. It may investigate any dispute or any situation that may lead to international friction or give rise to conflict in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is

likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. In short, the ask is not for the Security Council to solve the climate change crisis, but for it to recognize and address the risks posed to peace and security by climate change.

We must address that from a perspective of protecting people's lives, livelihoods and territorial integrity. The Council must move beyond its expression of concern. We simply cannot bear the costs of negligence and inaction, and in the true spirit of solidarity we must take meaningful action now. We take this moment to applaud the efforts taken by several members of the Security Council over the years to discuss this matter in the Council. In truth, it is important to ask whether we can envision peace prevailing in a future that stands to lose populations from so many parts of the world. World development within the biophysical limits of a stable Earth system is a necessity. Scientific research has made it possible to assess, identify, evaluate and quantify the risks of abrupt planetary and biome-level shifts due to our crossing the thresholds of planetary boundaries. In that regard, we urge the Security Council to monitor and take into account the planetary boundary thresholds established by scientists for maintaining a safe operating space for humankind. Monitoring and assessing the security implications of sea level rise will greatly assist taking action to prevent the tensions and conflicts that may result from it.

Despite the mounting challenges, the Maldives is determined to set an example in addressing the security and humanitarian risks related to sea level rise. Almost all of our 189 inhabited islands in the Maldives need coastal infrastructure, and we are working to safeguard them from tidal swells and beach erosion. Crucially, our coral reefs have served as a natural barrier of protection, which is why building the resilience and maintaining the growth of our coral ecosystems have continually been at the forefront of our policies. We have pledged to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

As the impacts of climate change intensify, it is undeniable that it is women who bear the brunt of those challenges, given their immense vulnerabilities across social, economic and cultural dimensions. In these times of crisis, we recognize that women and girls invariably have less access to resources and decision-making power. In the Maldives, we are working to empower women and provide inclusive decision-making environments. The Maldives Government, in collaboration with non-governmental

organizations and intergovernmental organizations, is working to make sure that women entrepreneurs and leaders lead the conversation on climate adaptation and resilience. We believe it is imperative that the Council do more to increase the participation of women in all aspects of decision-making and peacebuilding processes, including as mediators, negotiators and leaders of security forces.

In conclusion, the fate of our fragile existence rests on the urgency with which the world collectively acts today, and we must not delay. Let us all be the generation that is remembered to have saved a whole generation that is yet to come. The Maldives remains courageous and determined to stop the waves from washing away our beloved home, our beloved homeland, our culture, our history and the very essence of our being on this planet. Therefore, we urge the international community to demonstrate that courage and determination for the sake of humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): The Holy See thanks Malta for holding this open debate, which recognizes the threat that climate change poses to peace and security.

As Pope Francis has observed, the world's poor, though least responsible for climate change, are the most vulnerable and already suffer its impacts. That is especially true with regard to sea level rise, which mainly affects impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go. The negative effects of rising seas appear long before lands are submerged, as evidenced by coastal erosion, the saltwater intrusion of aquifers, soil salinization and the flooding of critical infrastructure. Of particular concern is the potential seawater infiltration of low-lying nuclear power plants and repositories containing radioactive waste from nuclear weapons testing, such as on Runit Island, which could contaminate widespread areas, including the flora and fauna upon which local populations depend for subsistence.

Such threats require timely climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Often, however, the affected States lack the means to adopt such measures. To address that, the developed States, which have disproportionately contributed to climate change, ought to make financing more easily accessible to coastal States, especially small island developing States,

so that they can adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, foster climate resilience and respond to loss and damage. Sea level rise can increase water scarcity, food insecurity and poverty, threatening social structures that depend on the local environment, and shape cultural identity, especially for indigenous communities. As a result, many of those affected have no choice but to flee their homes. Those climate migrants, however, are not recognized by international conventions as refugees and do not enjoy any legal protection whatsoever. While the Global Compact for Migration calls on States to develop solutions for migrants displaced owing to sea level rise, the international community must do more to clarify where and on what legal basis affected populations can relocate across borders.

Eventually, sea level rise will likely submerge the entire territories of some States. The Security Council has rightly expressed concern at the security implications of such a scenario, which raises legal issues concerning self-determination, maritime borders and statelessness. Ensuring the protection of affected persons requires greater clarity as to whether such States retain their sovereignty and the practical implications of that. The threat of sea level rise appeals to our responsibility to promote, through collective and joint commitment, a culture of care that places human dignity and the common good at the centre. States have the duty to promote changes of lifestyle, production and consumption in order to reduce the drivers of climate change and limit the resulting environmental degradation and human suffering.

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

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Malta for convening this important meeting.

The issue of sea level rise has been addressed by Member States in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which notes that the phenomenon is severely affecting coastal areas, including in many least developed countries and small island developing States, and thereby slowing progress on sustainable development.

As is widely accepted, for many small island developing States sea level rise poses one of the greatest threats to survival and opportunities for growth, and it can even lead to loss of territory for some. With regard to statehood and its continuity in the event of loss of territory, it should be noted that the International Law

Commission is the competent body for addressing the legal aspects of the issue, in accordance with its mandate, which includes the progressive development of international law and its codification.

With regard to the legal framework applicable to this issue, various instruments of international law contain provisions relevant to the issue of sea level rise and its effects. The first of these that we want to highlight is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), since it is the framework for the regulation of all activity in the oceans and seas. In that context, the starting points for measuring maritime spaces under national jurisdiction are baselines that are customarily measured from the low-water lines along coasts. With regard to the protection of persons affected by this scourge, there are a vast number of international norms aimed at preserving the integrity and well-being of the individual. In that regard, careful consideration should be given to whether a draft treaty would be necessary to address the issue or whether solutions could be provided within the framework of existing international law.

Regarding the effects of sea level rise on the boundaries of maritime spaces, it should be noted that in terms of legal certainty, it seems appropriate to consider that once the baselines and outer limits of the maritime spaces of a coastal or archipelagic State have been duly determined in accordance with the requirements of UNCLOS, which also reflects customary international law, States should not be required to readjust those baselines and boundaries in the event that sea level change affects the geographic reality of the coast. With regard to the effects of changes in coastlines along agreed maritime boundaries, it is vital to emphasize that the concept of a fundamental change of circumstances, also known as the *rebus sic stantibus* clause, is not applicable to boundary agreements, as set out in article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Both international jurisprudence and prominent jurists agree on that view. Examples worth mentioning in that regard include the judgment of the International Court of Justice in the case *Aegean Sea Continental Shelf (Greece v. Turkey)*, in addition to the *Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration between Bangladesh and India (Bangladesh v. India)*, to cite only two. In the latter ruling, the Permanent Court of Arbitration underlined that maritime delimitations, like land boundaries, must be stable and definitive to ensure a peaceful relationship between the States concerned in

the long term. It added that in the view of the Tribunal, neither the prospect of climate change nor its possible effects can jeopardize the many maritime boundaries established around the world. That applies equally to maritime boundaries agreed on between States and those established by international adjudication.

In the same vein, in its study on the issue of sea level rise, the International Law Association recommended an interpretation of UNCLOS that favours the preservation of rights to maritime spaces. With that in mind, the Association concluded that the question of the effects of sea level rise on boundaries should be considered much more broadly in the context of the importance of the principles of certainty and stability of treaties, in particular those relating to international boundaries and limits.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that given the complexity of this issue and the various political and legal aspects involved, it merits further in-depth analysis by the entire membership of the United Nations, within the General Assembly, taking into account the Assembly's competence, the views and practices of Member States and international jurisprudence.

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

Mr. Zellenrath (Netherlands): At the outset, the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of the European Union. I will also make some additional remarks in my national capacity, as the issue of sea level rise is of particular importance to all parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, from the North Sea to the Caribbean. I would therefore like to thank Malta for convening today's meeting, as sea-level rise has become a reality, with real implications for international peace and security.

My first point is about the threat we are facing. The Netherlands is still well protected against the sea. However, the danger of sea-level rise in the longer term is severe. Famously, significant parts of our territory are below or at sea level. And we are not alone. A significant part of the global population lives in fertile river deltas and coastal areas. Throughout history, we have seen that loss of land can serve as a catalyst for conflict, whether over resources, forced displacement or other threats to peace and security. The risks to those communities if sea levels rise by almost one metre in the next century — something that according to the

reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will happen if we fail to curb carbon emissions — are paramount and deserve the full attention of the Security Council.

My second point is about what we can do. If we do indeed manage to curb carbon emissions as much as the IPCC urges us to do, we will still have to deal with a certain degree of sea level rise. Coastal communities will have to adapt to that reality. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's continued call for spending at least 50 per cent of public climate financing on adaptation. In fact, the Netherlands already spends close to 70 per cent on adaptation. Other important aspects include adequate risk assessments and water-management solutions to protect lives and livelihoods, especially in the global South, both by Member States and United Nations organizations.

The upcoming United Nations Water Conference, to be held in March, which is the first of its kind in almost 40 years and will be co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands, provides a perfect platform to discuss those challenges in depth. In addition, we also need comprehensive evaluations and reports to thoroughly analyse the significant number of risks to peace and security related to sea level rise. The more we are aware, the better we can prepare. For instance, the establishment by the International Law Commission of its Study Group on sea-level rise in relation to international law is very welcome in that regard.

The Security Council is our principal organ for the maintenance of peace and security. It is therefore incumbent on it to call for appropriate action when stability is at risk, including in the case of risks related to sea level rise. Much is at stake, as the Secretary-General said this morning.

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

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): I would like to congratulate your delegation, Madam President, on Malta's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and to thank it for convening today's very timely open debate.

For a low-lying coastal country such as Bangladesh, sea level rise poses an existential threat to the lives and livelihoods of the coastal population. Just a one-metre rise in sea level could result in an inundation of a large area of Bangladesh and potentially displace more than

40 million people by the end of the century. To address the multidimensional threats posed by climate change and sea level rise, we have adopted comprehensive national policies and strategies. However, those measures at the national level will have minimal impact, or none at all, if the global response to sea level rise and its diverse implications remains slow and inadequate.

Allow me to share a few specific thoughts on today's topic.

First, we see sea level rise as a risk multiplier that may affect various dimensions of human security, especially in climate-vulnerable countries. It may create new risks or exacerbate existing ones by undermining food, energy and water security and even cause the loss of national territory. Broad understanding and recognition of the implications of sea level rise for peace and security are critical for taking appropriate action at the national, regional and global levels in the spirit of solidarity and international cooperation.

Secondly, there are many grave security threats posed by sea level rise, including the displacement of affected persons. In Bangladesh each year, an average of 110,000 people are being displaced from lower-lying areas owing to sea level rise and its multifaceted adverse impacts on water, soil, flora and fauna, to name a few. That exacerbates social challenges, including in population management, housing and social security architecture in the affected countries. The presence of 1.2 million Rohingya refugees in the southern part of my country is further aggravating the situation in an already severely land-scarce Bangladesh. We need a concrete legal framework and effective response mechanisms to address the issue of the forced displacement of people. The Secretary-General's action agenda on internal displacement is an important opportunity to step up collective action and resolve to address climate-change-related internal displacement.

Thirdly, the risks and vulnerabilities emanating from climate change and sea level rise need to be addressed in a holistic manner, including through measures that contribute to mitigation and adaptation. In that regard, climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building are crucial. Developed countries must fulfil their commitments to strengthen measures to support vulnerable countries. We welcome the loss and damage fund established at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to support

the global response to the adverse impacts of climate change, including sea level rise.

Despite repeated calls from scientists, policymakers and the people affected by climate change, actions to avert climate catastrophes remain woefully inadequate. Most unfortunately, there is a persistent denial mode, while countries like Bangladesh, with no historical role in climate change or factors that contribute to sea level rise, continue to suffer the worst consequences.

Against that backdrop, we believe that the upcoming draft resolution in the General Assembly seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal implications of climate change is a critical step for securing climate justice and equity for our people. We urge all Member States to extend their support to this historic initiative.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alateek (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by welcoming the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta and congratulating him and his country on presiding over the Security Council. I would like also to express my sincere thanks to them for holding this important debate on sea level rise and its effects on international peace and security.

This meeting is being held in delicate and extremely sensitive and important circumstances, given the growing environmental challenges that the international community is facing. That requires concerted international efforts to achieve constructive solutions in order to protect the segments of the population exposed to environmental threats and sea level rise from dire consequences that may occur as a result of environmental degradation.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always emphasized the importance of addressing challenges of climate change and its effects on sustainable development at the economic, environmental and social levels. Undoubtedly, pooling international efforts to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement is a balanced approach to ensure mitigation and adaptation. Indeed, the phenomenon of sea level rise is one of the most significant effects of climate change that we all, particularly developing countries and least developed countries, are facing. Protection from that phenomenon

requires us to work together in order to mitigate its effects and adapt to its potential outcomes.

In that connection, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has launched two initiatives, namely, Green Saudi Arabia and Green Middle East, which aim to address the challenges of climate change through the implementation of a circular carbon economy approach, reforestation, land rehabilitation and the protection of coral reefs, not only at the national level, but also at the regional level.

Turning to emissions mitigation, there are three main pillars of energy transformation: energy security, economic development and climate change. We must achieve them all equally and moderately, without prejudice to any of them. We must ensure that comprehensive solutions and techniques are used and that adequate funding is provided for all available and promising solutions while focusing on emissions, regardless of the energy source.

In that context, the Kingdom follows a balanced approach to mitigate emissions and to reach net-zero emissions, in line with its development plans and our economic diversification, without harming our supply chains, while also aiming to develop technologies that contribute to limiting emissions, in cooperation with various countries.

The Kingdom is aware of the importance of raising the level of expectations in addressing climate change, particularly in the current decade. We have therefore increased our nationally determined contributions by reducing our emissions by 278 million tons per year by 2030. That is double what was previously announced in 2015. Furthermore, we announced our ambitious aim to reach net zero in 2060, based on a circular carbon economy approach.

In addition, the Kingdom has joined the global pledge to reduce global methane emissions by 30 per cent, compared to 2020 levels. We also stress the importance of balanced solutions between mitigation and adaptation, to be achieved through international cooperation by boosting investments to both, in order to promote the global economy, address climate change and ensure the recovery of the global economy.

Adaptation is no less important than mitigation. The world is focusing on mitigation, but we must also adapt to the target temperatures set in the Paris Agreement — that is between 1.5°C and 2°C — particularly in developing

countries and those most vulnerable to climate change. Adaptation contributes to creating an environment that is more resistant to climate change, ensuring continued sustainable development while mitigating emissions at the same time. It should be noted that one of the most important outcomes of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was the launch of the Glasgow–Sharm El-Sheikh work programme, which seeks to enhance adaptive capabilities, strengthen endurance and limit the effects of climate change to the Paris Agreement target temperature range, achieving sustainable development according to national capacities and circumstances.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen to promote the issue of adaptation owing to its importance and its compatibility with the Kingdom's projects, such as Green Saudi Arabia initiative, which seeks to plant 10 billion trees across the country. That is equivalent to rehabilitating 40 million hectares of land and increasing protected areas to more than 30 per cent of our total land and sea areas. In addition, we are focusing our efforts on establishing the King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Natural Reserve, which covers 130,000 square kilometres in the north of the Kingdom in an effort to restore ecosystems and preserve wildlife.

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

Mr. Rodrigue (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Haiti, allow me to congratulate the Maltese presidency of the Security Council on having taken the initiative to organize this important open debate on the specific challenges related to sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security.

The Government of the Republic of Haiti is all the more pleased that this meeting, which takes place following the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, is being held at a pivotal moment ahead of the second part of the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Doha.

The Republic of Haiti, like all developing island States, is grappling with the many challenges of resource scarcity, exposure to natural disasters, ecological crises and vulnerability to external economic shocks. In addition, sea level rise, as a result of climate change, is hampering the progress of small island developing States (SIDS) towards sustainable development.

The current scientific research shows that climate change will lead to a substantial rise in sea levels in some regions of the world. Sea levels have already risen by between 10 and 25 centimetres over the past century. Global warming will accelerate those rates, with a sea level rise of 50 centimetres by 2100. Sea level rise is therefore the greatest existential threat to island and coastal countries. The phenomenon forces people to abandon their places of residence to seek refuge elsewhere, creating large-scale population movements and forced migration.

The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway recognizes that rising sea levels and other adverse effects of climate change pose significant risks to SIDS and are the greatest threat to the survival and sustainability of many of them, particularly through the loss of territory. The most serious physical impacts of the progressive sea level rise on coastal lowlands are the inundation and displacement of wetlands and lowlands, coastal erosion, increased vulnerability to the damage caused by coastal storms and flooding and the salinization of surface water and groundwater.

This is not only an environmental issue, but also a matter of the security and survival of such populations. It has been recognized that climate change and its adverse consequences pose a threat to the territorial integrity, security, sovereignty and even the very existence of islands owing to the submergence of existing land and the loss of maritime heritage. Even developed countries are not spared by the phenomenon, which is becoming increasingly widespread. Moreover, it can create social tensions within a country and trigger conflicts between neighbouring States.

In Haiti, the consequences of climate change pose a direct threat to both the densely populated coastal communities of the island and their economies. The projected increases in the average sea level and sea surface temperature also have implications for most of the country's strategic sectors, in particular fishing, agriculture and tourism, not to mention the health and well-being of our population. In addition to those existing sources of pressure and concern, there are also those relating to climate variability and change, which are likely to further exacerbate the degradation of the Haitian coastal area — hence the need to develop recommendations for the protection of mangroves and marine ecosystems, as well as coastal tourism and agricultural infrastructure.

All the facts related to the impact of sea level rise that I have described demonstrate that climate issues have concrete implications for international security and peace. Security is multidimensional, and today it goes beyond traditional military issues to include the so-called new threats to peace, which are more widespread, more fragmented and often more of a social than a military nature. Human security is a prerequisite for peace and development. The management of security, in all its dimensions, must therefore be part of a global approach that challenges unilateralism and draws on the strength of interdependence.

The Government of Haiti hopes that this enriching debate on sea level rise and its implications for peace and security will result in conclusions and recommendations that will be put to good use to advance the dialogue on this critical issue for our common future, international peace and security and the sustainable development of small island developing States and coastal countries, the sustainability and survival of which are today threatened.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this important open debate of the Security Council. The delegation of Sierra Leone congratulates Malta on its election to the Security Council and its assumption of the presidency. I also thank the briefers for their important contributions.

Sierra Leone recognizes the nexus between climate change and peace and security, and welcomes the debate on sea level rise and implications for international peace and security. Given the acute awareness of the vulnerability of States, in particular developing coastal States and small island developing States, to climate change, in its bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2024–2025 Sierra Leone has prioritized the serious consideration of and robust engagement on climate security and risks as an imperative.

In the ongoing consultations within the General Assembly to request an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in relation to climate change, an initiative led by Vanuatu and of which Sierra Leone is a core member, recognition has been duly given to the unprecedented challenge of civilizational proportions of climate change, requiring an immediate and urgent

response. That response must be comprehensive and multidimensional, taking a whole-of-United-Nations approach to addressing climate change and its effects.

Sierra Leone notes the sustained efforts to continue the Security Council's engagement on the security implications of climate change, particularly following its 13 December 2021 vote on the thematic draft resolution contained in document S/2021/990, proposed by Ireland and the Niger. We therefore acknowledge the work and efforts to integrate climate change language into country- and region-specific outcomes.

We call for a climate change approach to both case-specific and thematic issues, noting the developments in 2022, including the expressed concerns that climate change is a risk multiplier that can exacerbate insecurity. Having agreed on the need to combat climate change, the Security Council must unite around the role that it must play in addressing the threat under its mandate and in appropriate circumstances.

On sea level rise, appropriate attention must be paid by the Security Council to the identifiable ocean-related climate security risks and threats, including loss of territory, the attendant humanitarian consequences, State sovereignty, statehood and maritime delimitation and disputes.

Sierra Leone therefore welcomes the study of the topic of sea level rise in relation to international law by the International Law Commission. The study by the Commission, which is legal in nature, exemplifies the critical synergy that can be developed through a whole-of-United-Nations approach as part of the preventive mechanisms.

Let me conclude by expressing Sierra Leone's commitment to pursue constructive engagement on climate change, peace and security, including ocean-related climate security, noting the nexus related to peacebuilding and addressing fragility and the potential disproportionate impacts on women and children.

The President: The representative of Japan has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): In the statements made earlier by the Chinese and Russian delegations, reference was made to the discharge into the sea of the water treated through the advanced liquid processing system at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. Japan will never approve the discharge of such water into the sea if it fails to meet regulatory standards, based on

international standards. The International Atomic Energy Agency and international experts have been reviewing our efforts, and that review will continue. Japan will take appropriate measures before the commencement of the discharge, taking into account the observations of the review to be conducted prior to the discharge, and the concentration level of the water to be discharged will be far below the regulatory standard. Japan has explained the matter to the international community in a highly transparent manner, based on scientific evidence, and will continue to do so.

As one of the last speakers, Japan would once again like to thank and congratulate Malta for addressing a theme as important as sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security

The President: The representative of China has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I know that everyone is probably hungry, but given the importance of the issue at hand, I would like to make a further statement in response to the statement made by the representative of Japan concerning the discharge by Japan of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea. We would like to further elaborate on our position. As is clear to everyone, the topic of our discussion today is the implications of sea level rise. One can only imagine that if what is rising is highly nuclear-contaminated sea, then the implications will be far more dramatic and the negative effects farther reaching. That is the main reason why China has raised the concern. Japan has confirmed that it will release at least 400,000 tons of nuclear-contaminated water into the Pacific ocean in the first quarter of this year. The contaminated water from the Fukushima contains more than 60 types of radioactive substances, and the discharge is estimated to last for up to 30 years.

Japan's discharge of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea will severely endanger the global marine environment, ecosystems and the lives and health of people of all countries. Therefore, that is by no means a private matter for Japan. Japan's neighbouring countries, the Pacific island countries and other stakeholders have all expressed serious concerns about Japan's wrong decision. And within Japan, strong voices of opposition have also been raised.

Regrettably, to date Japan has yet to provide a science-based and credible explanations on key issues, such as the legitimacy of its discharge programme, the

reliability of its data on nuclear-contaminated water, the effectiveness of the treatment systems and the uncertainties concerning the environmental impact, nor has it conducted full and meaningful consultations with stakeholders, including neighbouring countries. The relevant international organization has yet to complete an assessment of Japan's disposal programme, let alone reach concrete conclusions. Under such circumstances, Japan has been bent on forcibly approving the discharge programme of the nuclear-contaminated water and has accelerated the preparations for its discharge. Such behaviour is extremely irresponsible. Japan has indicated that nuclear-contaminated water after treatment is completely harmless, which I find highly questionable. If that is really the case, then the water could be discharged elsewhere, including

into Japan's own rivers or lakes. China urges Japan to take seriously the legitimate concerns of all parties and not to take the liberty of initiating the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water without prior consultation or agreement with neighbouring countries, other stakeholders and the relevant international organizations. We also call on the international community to follow this important issue closely.

Before concluding, I would like to join Japan in thanking the presidency of Malta for convening this important meeting, at which countries can focus on an issue that has implications for the shared future and welfare of humankind.

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.