

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 2 February 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Malta, the Security Council plans to hold an open debate on 14 February 2023 on the theme “Sea-level rise – implications for international peace and security”, under the agenda item entitled “Threats to international peace and security”.

In this regard, Malta has prepared a concept note (see annex). I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Vanessa **Frazier**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations



## **Annex to the letter dated 2 February 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

### **Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Threats to international peace and security: sea-level rise – implications for international peace and security”, 14 February 2023, 10 a.m.**

#### **I. Background**

##### **Climate change and its impacts, particularly sea-level rise, on peace and security**

The consequences of climate change for peace and security are being felt more acutely all around the world. Various manifestations include increasing episodes of sudden and severe weather disasters, droughts, rising temperatures and sea-level rise, which add further strain for already vulnerable countries. This “threat multiplier” effect in turn adds risks for peace and security in various contexts.

The Secretary-General has referred to reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which show that climate disruption caused by human activities is widespread and intensifying while calling for much bolder climate action to maintain international peace and security: “It is clear that climate change and environmental mismanagement are risk multipliers. Where coping capacities are limited and there is high dependence on shrinking natural resources and ecosystem services, such as water and fertile land, grievances and tensions can explode, complicating efforts to prevent conflict and to sustain peace”.

Ocean-related climate security risks continue to be a daily reality for many countries, with such threats disproportionately affecting island nations and coastal regions. With low-lying coastal zones home to over 600 million people and small island developing States home to over 60 million, the threats unleashed by climate change to their peace and security are clear as the pressures on the world’s oceans threaten their very existence.

Continued and accelerating sea-level rise has the ability to disable critical infrastructure and subject low-lying coastal communities and entire island States to submergence and territorial loss. According to scientific data, sea-level rise will displace millions in the years to come, and hundreds of millions by the year 2100. The humanitarian consequences will have disproportionate impacts on women and children, in particular girls, by further exacerbating instability in regions with already existing tensions over resources, such as food and water. The gender dimensions of these risks and vulnerabilities are to be analysed, also within the changing global context of advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

Sea-level rise constitutes a very real threat to State sovereignty. One of the most severe consequences is the loss of statehood. With small island developing States primarily exposed to sudden weather disasters increasing in severity and affecting coastal communities around the world, sea-level rise threatens the identity and security of these regions and has the ability to wipe out entire sovereign nations altogether. Other serious effects concern changes in the maritime geography, including in maritime delimitations, opening up new areas for exploitation and complicating maritime disputes; and incursions of seawater into the water tables, further exacerbating water security issues.

The nexus between climate change and security is an established theme, with a strong scientific basis that the security implications of climate change will continue

to exacerbate long-existing vulnerabilities as well as contribute to emerging risks. This climate-security nexus is present in its impact on our ocean – the single largest habitat on our planet.

By protecting our oceans, we are protecting our citizens, their livelihoods and the security of our nations. These concerns have legal, economic, political and security consequences. While the International Law Commission is looking into legal issues related to statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise, there is a need for the Security Council to build on its expression of concern about the possible security implications arising from sea-level rise, to consider the related political and security concerns and to focus on how to prevent them and build resilience.

## II. Objective and guiding questions

As part of Malta's presidency of the Security Council for February 2023, this ministerial-level open debate aims at highlighting the risks to international peace and security posed by sea-level rise and exploring ways in which the Security Council can address these risks in the global security architecture and invest in preventive mechanisms.

In consideration of the objectives of the debate, the following questions may help to guide interventions by Member States, which are also encouraged to share good practices and lessons learned:

1. How can the Security Council, in synergy with other United Nations bodies, best contribute to driving actions to address risks and responses to peace and security resulting from sea-level rise as well as preventing tensions and conflict risks resulting therefrom?
2. How will sea-level rise jeopardize statehood, including that of small island developing States, and how is the limited and unambitious action to address climate change impinging on their sovereignty and territorial integrity?
3. What role can national Governments, regional organizations and local actors play in addressing the security and humanitarian risks related to sea-level rise?
4. How can the Security Council respond to the triple nexus of gender inequality, State fragility and climate vulnerability, and what actions can be identified to strengthen women's leadership and inclusion in decision-making?

## III. Format

The ministerial-level open debate will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, Ian Borg. The following speakers will brief the Council.

- Secretary-General
- President of the General Assembly
- Co-Chair of the Study Group on sea-level rise in relation to international law of the International Law Commission
- Civil society organization briefer

Member States wishing to participate in person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative

or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., requesting to participate in accordance with Rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. Inscription for said meeting will open on Thursday, 9 February 2023, at 9.30 a.m.

In order to guarantee the participation of as many Member States as possible, statements should not exceed three minutes.

It is the intention of the presidency to prepare a compilation of all statements delivered at and submitted to the open debate. In this regard, Member States are encouraged to send their statements in advance by email to [unsc.newyork@gov.mt](mailto:unsc.newyork@gov.mt).

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