



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Twenty-fourth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

New York, 9 June 2014

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Nicholas Emiliou
Permanent Representative**

Check against delivery

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Cyprus aligns itself with the statement made by Greece on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

It is an honour to address this meeting today, to commemorate and celebrate the 20 years since the entry into force of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. For an island state such as Cyprus, the stability and certainty the Convention provides, as the overarching legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas, amounts to a collective achievement of the international community in promoting peace and the rule of law. The near universal participation to the Convention, with 166 states parties to date, and the fact that UNCLOS reflects customary international law truly make it the constitutional charter of the seas.

The freedom of the high seas and the freedom of navigation are fundamentally important to Cyprus, being a shipping centre with a merchant fleet ranking tenth internationally. Additionally, the Convention provides the relevant international legal framework inter alia for maritime boundary delimitation, including the coastal State's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in its maritime areas. This is of utmost importance to Cyprus, who shares maritime borders with six of its neighbours.

In line with the provisions of UNCLOS, Cyprus proclaimed by law in 2004 the outer limit of its exclusive economic zone, which does not extend beyond the 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of its territorial sea is measured. Pursuant to Articles 74(1) and 83(1) of UNCLOS, it has signed delimitation agreements of its exclusive economic zone, on the basis of the median-line principle, with three of its neighbouring countries.

Stemming from its inherent and exclusive sovereign rights, Cyprus has, in relation to hydrocarbon resources, proceeded with the exploration of the areas under its jurisdiction and will proceed with their exploitation in the near future.

For this purpose, guided by the principles of UNCLOS, Cyprus is in the process of reviewing its relevant national legislation in an effort to fully align it with the Convention.

The conclusion of UNCLOS and its entry into force has provided the necessary legal certainty for my country, like many others, to explore the natural wealth that the sea, its seabed and subsoil have to offer in an environment that safeguards good neighbourly relations. Importantly, in the case of disputes, the Convention itself provides mechanisms for their peaceful settlement amongst states parties.

In conclusion, Mr. President, and in the spirit that this Convention was created, namely to bring a stable order in the use and regulation of the oceans and seas, we call upon those states that have not yet done so, to become parties to the Convention and celebrate with us on such future occasions.

Thank you.