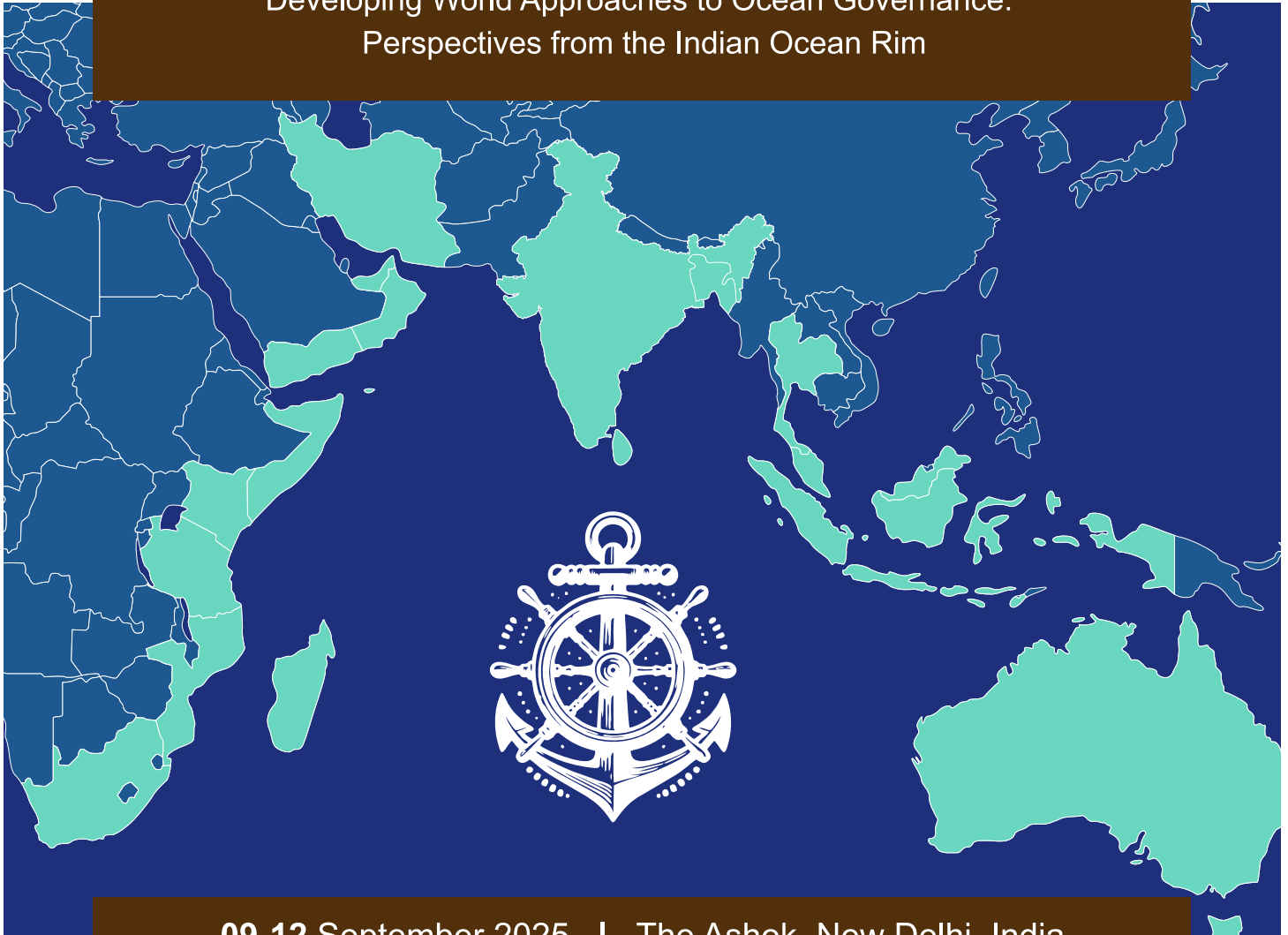


48TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON OCEANS LAW & POLICY

Developing World Approaches to Ocean Governance:
Perspectives from the Indian Ocean Rim



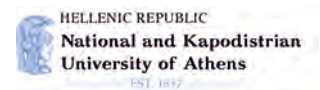
09-12 September 2025 | The Ashok, New Delhi, India

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Prof. (Dr.) S. Shanthakumar

Provost, Gujarat Maritime University

Director, Gujarat National Law University

Introductory Message from the Host

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the **48th Annual Conference on Oceans Law & Policy**, convened under the theme: **“Developing World Approaches to Ocean Governance: Perspectives from the Indian Ocean Rim.”**

For nearly five decades, this conference has served as a vital forum for dialogue, collaboration, and scholarship on the evolving challenges of our oceans. The 48th edition of COLP holds unique significance, as for the first time, this conference on Ocean Law and Policy is taking place in the Indian Subcontinent. For an infant institute like ours, the opportunity to host this historic event marks a significant and unforgettable achievement.

This year’s COLP focuses on the Indian Ocean Rim, highlighting both the immense opportunities and the complex responsibilities shared by coastal states, island nations, and international stakeholders in this dynamic region.

The Indian Ocean is not only central to global trade and connectivity, but also to questions of maritime security, environmental sustainability, and the equitable use of marine resources. By centring developing world perspectives, we aim to enrich the global conversation with voices, experiences, and approaches that have too often been underrepresented in shaping international ocean governance.

Over the course of this conference, we will hear from distinguished scholars, policymakers, and practitioners whose insights will deepen our collective understanding and inspire innovative, inclusive approaches to ocean law and policy.

What makes this gathering especially meaningful is our focus on developing world perspectives. Too often, these voices are underrepresented in shaping global ocean governance. This conference gives us an opportunity to listen, to learn, and to imagine more inclusive approaches to managing the challenges and opportunities of the oceans.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs for their support in granting the necessary clearances. I am equally grateful to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and the Ministry of Earth Sciences for their steadfast support in making this event possible. My heartfelt thanks also go to our partners, distinguished speakers, and participants whose presence enriches this gathering. May the discussions we share here not only strengthen academic and policy linkages but also foster more just, sustainable, and cooperative governance of our shared oceans.

Welcome, and I look forward to the conversations ahead.

About the Conference

The 48th Conference on Oceans Law & Policy (COLP48) stands as a venerable forum where experts of diverse disciplines converge in the pursuit of maritime stability and security, stewardship over the boundless oceanic expanse, and economic sustainable development of the Blue Economy, and protection of human rights at sea. This year's Conference, under the theme **"Developing World Approaches to Ocean Governance: Perspectives from the Indian Ocean Rim"**, offers an opportunity to advance and strengthen maritime governance.

The 48th Annual Conference of 2025 marks a historic first: a singular assembly in the Indian subcontinent. This distinguished gathering by a consortium led by the Stockton Center for International Law at the US Naval War College (USNWC), shall be graciously hosted in New Delhi by Gujarat Maritime University (GMU) and partnering with the World Maritime University – Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute (WMU-GOI), Ankara National Center for the Sea and Maritime Law (DEHUKAM), Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Centre for Climate Change Law and Governance (CLIMA) at the University of Copenhagen, Korea Maritime Institute (KMI), IMO-International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI), UiT Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea (NCLOS), NUS Centre for International Law (CIL), National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Government of India.

As the oldest continuous multilateral gathering of oceans law and policy, COLP48 will focus on innovations in international maritime law and governance, and consider the unique perspectives and contributions of developing states as they increasingly shape the future. In addressing the various dimensions of ocean law and policy, be they of global or regional, COLP fosters thoughtful dialogues and prudent deliberations upon the enduring and emergent questions that stir the legal conscience of the international community.

Through successive gatherings, the Conference has covered topics of profound impact: the 47th COLP convened in Lima, Peru (2024) discussed "Ocean Governance in the South Pacific and Latin America", the 46th Annual COLP convened in Istanbul in the year 2023, meditated upon "Safe, Secure, and Sustainable Shipping"; the 45th in Vietnam (2022) commemorated four decades of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with solemn reflection on its enduring legacy; while the 44th, held virtually in 2021 with Japan, turned its gaze toward "Peaceful Maritime Engagement in East Asia and the Pacific Region."

In addressing the pressing issues facing the Indian Ocean Region, which range from environmental degradation to geopolitical challenges, COLP48 will not merely discuss the state of affairs but will also explore the rights and duties of states in the Indian Ocean and consider opportunities for concrete and collective action. It will spotlight the critical role that collaboration, sustainability, and shared governance can play in addressing the region's complex needs. COLP48 especially seeks to embrace the full potential of the leadership, vision, and capacity for change of the states in the Indian Ocean Region and the value of other stakeholders to contribute to safety, security, economic prosperity and

environmental sustainability. By exchanging ideas, confronting tough questions, and forging stronger alliances, the Conference promises to leave the participants not only with clearer solutions but with renewed hope for the future of Indian Ocean Governance.

The collected findings of the conference will be published in edited form in a volume, “Developing World Approaches to Ocean Governance: Perspectives from the Indian Ocean Rim,” edited by James Kraska, Ronán Long, and S. Shanthakumar.



Day 1: Tuesday 09 September 2025

BBNJ Clinic Workshop



Pre-Conference BBNJ Clinic Workshop on Ratification & Implementation

Session Name: The Ireland & WMU-GOI BBNJ Clinic: Sharing Capacity with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Coastal Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to ratify and implement the BBNJ Agreement

Speakers:

1. **Ronán Long**, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, WMU
2. **Ríán Derrig**, Assistant Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

Rapporteur: **Akrita Kaur**, PhD Scholar, Panjab University.

SEGMENT I

Introductory Session

Ronán Long, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, WMU

Prof. Ronán Long (WMU) opened the session, thanking contributors and outlining the programme’s three segments. The objectives of the programme focused on capacity sharing, particularly addressing key issues in the African and Indian Ocean regions. It also aimed to identify key regional States and collaboratively design, develop, and host training workshops. The programme was divided into three segments. The first segment provided an overview, highlighting that the clinic programme was intended for international lawyers dealing with challenges related to the implementation of relevant legislation. The second segment, titled Current Regional Efforts, was moderated by Dr. Aspasia Pastra. The third segment, the Preparatory Consultative Roundtable, was moderated by Dr. Kahlil Hassanali.



Dr. Rián Derrig, Assistant Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

The speaker explained that the legal component of the BBNJ Clinic was developed to provide a structured framework for addressing the legal and institutional challenges associated with implementing the BBNJ Agreement. Positioned within Ireland's Irish Aid programme, the initiative focuses on supporting Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries, responding to



the global need to conserve marine biodiversity and reduce inequalities in access to ocean resources. Operating as a four year global programme from 2024 to 2028, the BBNJ Clinic aims to promote ocean sustainability and conservation through capacity building, legislative gap analysis, knowledge sharing, and the development of legal and technical expertise, while fostering networks to support effective ratification and implementation of the Agreement.

The speaker also highlighted key milestones achieved by the BBNJ Clinic, including the organization of the BBNJ Symposium, bilateral engagements, and participation in major international forums such as the World Ocean Summit and Expo. Further achievements included hosting a High Level Roundtable and training programmes on environmental impact assessments and legislative drafting, active engagement in the BBNJ Preparatory Commission at the United Nations, contributions to the UN Ocean Conference emphasizing the leadership of SIDs and LDCs, and participation in the 48th Conference on Oceans Law and Policy.

SEGMENT II

Moderator: **Aspasia Pastra**, Assistant Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

Speaker: **Paul de Bruyn**, Executive Secretary of Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

The Speaker provided that the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement establishes measures to regulate the exploitation and conservation of resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, ensuring their sustainable use. Further, within the Indian Ocean, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), comprising 29 member states, is mandated to align with BBNJ principles.

However, a diversity of opinions among members often complicates consensus-building. For effective implementation, member states must actively encourage and push one another to adopt coherent measures. This is particularly critical since even within the same country, conflicting views and priorities can arise. Coordination and collective action are therefore indispensable for meaningful outcomes.



The speaker also highlighted that a key challenge lies in the restricted mandates of regional bodies and the limited scientific and technological capacities of many developing coastal states in the Indian Ocean. This underscores the need for support from technologically advanced nations. Ultimately, harmonisation of resource use across jurisdictions was observed to be essential to balance sustainable development, equitable benefit-sharing, and the long-term protection of marine biodiversity in the high seas.

Speaker: **Dr. Rizza DeJucos**, Asian Regional Coordinator, High Seas Alliance

The speaker emphasized that capacity building remains a central pillar of the BBNJ Clinic's work in supporting States through the ratification and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. Key initiatives include collaboration with India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, reflecting strong interest in technological development and ratification, and engagement with policymakers in the Maldives to



address the Agreement's implications for existing international obligations and associated financial commitments. Bilateral cooperation with Thailand further highlighted the need for regional and cross institutional coordination, recognizing that effective ratification requires the involvement of multiple agencies, experts, and institutions rather than isolated ministerial efforts.

On implementation, the speaker noted the Clinic's direct support to Indonesia in

developing a national framework aligned with the BBNJ Agreement, particularly in relation to its Marine Protected Areas, including one in the Indian Ocean. The speaker also highlighted the organization of three Preparatory Commissions, which provided technical, legal, and institutional guidance to participating States. These efforts have significantly enhanced national preparedness for both ratification and implementation of the Agreement, contributing to broader international capacity for sustainable ocean governance.

Speaker: **Timothy Andrew**, Policy and Governance Officer, Nairobi Convention Secretariat.

The speaker emphasized that capacity building constitutes a core pillar of the BBNJ Clinic's work, aimed at supporting States throughout the ratification and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. Key collaborations included engagement with India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, reflecting strong commitment to technological advancement and ratification, as well as work with policymakers in the Maldives to address legal compatibility and financial obligations under the Agreement. Bilateral cooperation with Thailand underscored the importance of regional and cross institutional coordination, while collaboration with Indonesia focused on aligning domestic frameworks with BBNJ obligations, particularly in the context of Marine Protected Areas. These initiatives illustrated the Clinic's broader objective of strengthening national governance and institutional readiness.



The speaker further highlighted the Clinic's role in organizing three Preparatory Commissions, which provided participating countries with technical, legal, and institutional guidance to support informed progress toward ratification and implementation. Responding to questions on regional engagement, Dr. Ríán Derrig noted that regional consultation is central to the programme's approach, citing established partnerships in the Caribbean and acknowledging that engagement in the Indian Ocean region remains at a nascent stage. He indicated that the present conference marked the beginning of deeper regional dialogue, with a dedicated regional workshop planned for early the following year to enhance cooperation and stakeholder involvement.

SEGMENT III

Moderator: Dr. Kahlil Hassanali, Senior Research Officer, Institute of Marine Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago

Dr. Kahlil Hassanali opened the roundtable by inviting discussion on the current status of ratification efforts for the BBNJ Agreement, particularly among Indian Ocean and African coastal least developed countries. In response, Ms. Angelina noted that approximately twenty-four countries had ratified the Agreement globally. Within the Indian Ocean region, Seychelles and Mauritius had



completed ratification, while in West Africa, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau had done the same. However, across the African continent, only nine of fifty-four states had ratified, raising concern that Africa risked lagging behind other regions. She highlighted that certain coastal least developed countries, such as Djibouti and Guinea, had signed but not yet ratified, underscoring the need for sustained regional engagement to close this gap.

Challenges to Ratification and Implementation

Participants identified limited technical expertise and resource constraints as major barriers for Indian Ocean and African states in ratifying and implementing the BBNJ Agreement. Many countries rely heavily on UN technical assistance due to weak national capacity, while the ratification process itself often requires fact-finding, capacity assessments, and legislative support. Additional challenges include uncertainty around new mechanisms such as the Clearing-House Mechanism and the functioning of the COP, as well as the overall complexity of the treaty and its institutional architecture. Smaller administrations also face difficulties in consistently participating in multiple international meetings.

Intellectual Property and Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs)

Addressing a question from Dr. Gabriela on how existing intellectual property regimes, particularly under the World Trade Organization, might restrict access to MGRs and affect Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Dr. Rían Derrig explained that intellectual property in relation to MGRs remained a contested issue. He stated that this matter would ultimately be decided through COP

negotiations and was therefore premature to define conclusively. Drawing from past clinic workshops, including one in Grenada, Dr. Derrig noted that these discussions often connected BBNJ processes with experiences under the Convention on Biological Diversity. He emphasized the importance of continued regional-level work to ensure that national legislation and regional practices aligned with evolving global frameworks.

Financial, Legal, and Institutional Challenges

Speakers noted that the BBNJ Agreement is already being operationalized ahead of the first COP, with financial support available through mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility, though access pathways remain unclear for many states. Enabling legislation and sustained capacity-building were highlighted as key challenges, especially for SIDS facing legal drafting constraints and reliance on externally developed models. Indonesia's experience demonstrated that strong political leadership and early inter-ministerial coordination can facilitate streamlined ratification. Future capacity-building efforts should be region-specific, inclusive, and focused on practical implementation guidance, particularly on complex issues such as MGRs, while ensuring adequate funding and stakeholder participation.

Concluding Remark for BBNJ Workshop

Professor Ronán Long, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

Professor Ronán Long emphasized that the BBNJ Agreement must be implemented in harmony with existing legal regimes. He clarified that for matters related to shipping, safety, and security, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) remained the principal authority. Professor Long stressed that while the BBNJ Agreement requires states to promote its objectives, it must not undermine



existing instruments. Achieving this balance, he noted, demanded effective coordination among national delegations. He observed that many states faced challenges in ensuring their delegations could meaningfully engage in BBNJ processes while maintaining coherence in domestic legislation. In this regard, institutions like the World Maritime University played a crucial role in facilitating

capacity-building and supporting both parties and non-parties to the Agreement.

The consultative event concluded by marking the beginning of a sustained process of dialogue and collaboration on BBNJ implementation. The next phase would involve the preparation of a comprehensive collective report capturing the discussions held. Over the coming days, dedicated sessions on BBNJ, maritime safety, maritime security, and regional perspectives were expected to deepen these conversations and guide future policy and capacity-building initiatives.





Welcome Ceremony

Speakers:

1. **Ambassador Hasanthi Dissanayake**, Director General Ocean Affairs, Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka (online)
2. **Dato' Monaliza binti Suhaimi**, Chairman Director General, Maritime Institute of Malaysia, (MIMA)
3. **Dr. M Ravichandran**, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
4. **Prof. Ronán Long**, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, WMU
5. **Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Kaushik**, Dean Academic Affairs, Gujarat Maritime University
6. **Dr. Abhay Singh**, Director (SMLPA), Gujarat Maritime University

Rapporteurs: **Arundathi M S**, Teaching & Research Associate, Gujarat Maritime University.

Session Name: Housekeeping Remarks

Dr. Abhay Singh, Director (SMLPA), Gujarat Maritime University

Dr. Abhay Singh welcomed participants to the conference, noting the historic significance of hosting the event in the region for the first time in its 47 year history, marking a moment of pride for India and the wider subcontinent. He expressed gratitude to the sixteen partner institutions, including the World Maritime University and the United States Naval War College, as well as government bodies, associate partners, and

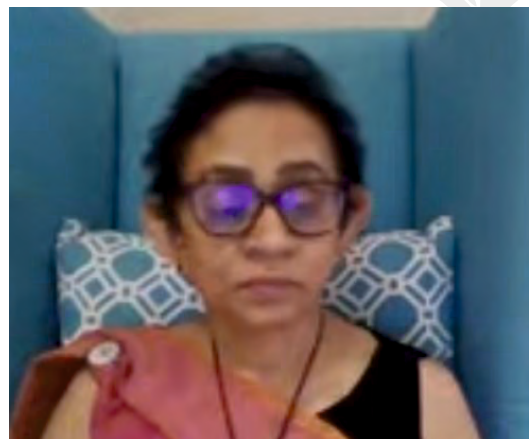


sponsors whose support made the conference possible. He also acknowledged the collaboration of a wide range of national and international academic and research institutions that contributed to organizing the three day event.

He highlighted that the conference theme focused on Third World Approaches to International Law and its relevance to ocean governance, an area that has received comparatively limited scholarly attention despite its growing importance. Dr. Singh outlined that the conference sessions would address key regional and global maritime issues, including biodiversity loss, marine pollution, shipping and taxation, small island state concerns, offshore energy infrastructure, maritime security, and boundary disputes. Concluding his remarks, he thanked the participants and expressed optimism that the conference would foster meaningful dialogue and collaborative engagement on contemporary challenges in ocean governance.

Ambassador Hasanthi Dissanayake, Director General Ocean Affairs, Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka (online)

The speaker conceptualized ocean governance as an integrated framework of law, policy, and cooperation that safeguards marine ecosystems while enabling sustainable and secure use of ocean resources, a priority heightened by expanding Blue Economy activities. She described the



ocean as a living system that underpins climate regulation, food security, energy, transport, and global communications, and highlighted the Indian Ocean's historic and continuing role as a major maritime crossroads connecting civilizations, trade routes, and underwater heritage, while remaining central to global commerce, energy flows, and digital connectivity.

She also highlighted persistent environmental and geopolitical challenges in the Indian Ocean, including climate change, pollution, illegal fishing, piracy, and strategic rivalries. While acknowledging the foundational role of legal instruments such as UNCLOS and the BBNJ Agreement, she emphasized that effective governance requires strong implementation, political will, inclusivity, and diplomacy. Drawing on Sri Lanka's experience, she demonstrated how smaller states can influence ocean governance through regional cooperation, science, and community engagement, and concluded by urging a cooperative, inclusive approach that balances development, conservation, and peace for future generations.

Dato' Monaliza binti Suhaimi, Chairman Director General, Maritime Institute of Malaysia, (MIMA)

The speaker from the Maritime Institute of Malaysia expressed appreciation for participating in the 48th Conference on Oceans Law and Policy and underscored the importance of the theme on developing world approaches to ocean governance from the Indian Ocean Rim. She highlighted that the theme provides a vital platform for developing countries to share experiences and advance inclusive governance frameworks that reflect Global South realities, while reaffirming Malaysia's strong support for UNCLOS and its continuing relevance to international ocean governance.



She outlined Malaysia's active engagement in the Indian Ocean Rim Association since 1997 and emphasized the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean for global trade and communication infrastructure. Drawing attention to regional challenges such as illegal fishing, piracy, sea level rise, and climate change, she stressed the need for enhanced cooperation, peace, and security among Indian Ocean states. Concluding, she reiterated Malaysia's commitment to sustainable ocean development aligned with the SDGs and expressed hope that the

conference would strengthen collective efforts to safeguard the oceans for future generations.

Dr. M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)

The speaker highlighted key ocean opportunities and challenges with a specific focus on the Indian Ocean region, aiming to inform policymakers and lawmakers about effective ocean governance frameworks. Oceans play a crucial role in food security, climate regulation, carbon sequestration, and economic activities such as fisheries, transport, tourism, and renewable energy. However, increasing pressures from climate change, pollution, overexploitation, and natural hazards pose serious threats, particularly in areas beyond national jurisdiction.



The Indian Ocean was identified as uniquely vulnerable due to its monsoon-driven circulation, restricted heat exchange, and rising temperatures, leading to intensified marine heatwaves, ecosystem degradation, and declining productivity. Addressing these challenges requires improved ocean observation, marine spatial planning, sustainable resource use, technological innovation, and ecosystem-based approaches. The speaker emphasized that regional cooperation, capacity building, and science-based policymaking are essential to ensure a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive ocean future, particularly for developing countries in the Indian Ocean region.

Prof. Ronán Long, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, WMU

Professor Ronán Long delivered the concluding remarks, expressing gratitude to the Government of India for hosting the conference and acknowledging Dr. Abhay Singh for highlighting the Indian subcontinent's historic role in ocean trade. He noted the significance of marking the 48th edition of the conference in India and took pride in the strong presence of



Indian alumni from the World Maritime University who now serve as maritime leaders worldwide. He also referred to the keynote contributions, including the scientific context provided by Dr. M Ravichandran, Secretary to the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and the participation of remote keynote speakers, emphasizing the complexity of regional and global ocean governance issues addressed within the conference's longstanding academic tradition.

He highlighted the distinctiveness of this year's conference for bringing together eleven partner institutions, particularly commending Gujarat Maritime University as the local host for its efforts in organizing the event. Acknowledging the contributions of leading scholars and institutional partners, including the Stockton Centre for International Law and the United States Naval War College, he emphasized the high academic quality of the discussions, marked by rigorous debate and a shared commitment to cooperation. He concluded by noting that this exchange of diverse perspectives reflected the enduring strength and relevance of the conference program.

Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Kaushik, Dean Academic Affairs, Gujarat Maritime University

Prof. Kaushik acknowledged the historic significance of Gujarat Maritime University hosting the 48th Annual Conference on Oceans Law and Policy (COLP48) in India for the first time. She expressed her sincere gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) S. Shanthakumar, Provost, Gujarat Maritime University, whose leadership, vision, and initiative took the lead in bringing this prestigious international conference to India, thereby strengthening GMU's engagement with leading global institutions in maritime education, law, policy, and ocean governance.



She extended her heartfelt appreciation to all distinguished speakers for their valuable contributions and insightful perspectives, and acknowledged the World Maritime University, United States Naval War College, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, and all partner institutions, academic and research organisations, government bodies, associate partners, and sponsors whose collective support made COLP48 possible. She highlighted the significance of this first India edition as a platform for strengthening international collaboration and advancing meaningful dialogue on ocean governance, particularly from the perspectives and priorities of the Global South.

Day 2: Wednesday 10 September 2025



Speakers:

1. **Prof. Dr. Manoj Kumar Sinha**, President, Indian Society of International Law
2. **Judge Neeru Chadha**, Vice President, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), Hamburg, Germany
3. **Ms. Shalini**, Assistant Professor, Gujarat Maritime University

Rapporteur: **Mili Trivedi**, Teaching & Research Associate, Gujarat Maritime University

Session Name: Housekeeping Remarks

Ms. Shalini, Assistant Professor, Gujarat Maritime University

The second day of COLP 48 commenced with Ms. Shalini extending a warm welcome to all participants and providing essential housekeeping instructions for the smooth conduct of the conference. She outlined the day's schedule,



mentioning that four sessions were planned, with some held parallelly in different venues, the Banquet Hall and the Friendship Lounge. Participants were reminded to maintain punctuality, keep mobile devices on silent mode, and adhere to time limits to ensure timely proceedings. She also encouraged everyone to participate in the scheduled refreshment breaks, lunch, and cultural programs planned for the evening, including the social and field visits arranged for the concluding day. Special instructions were provided for online attendees to keep microphones muted unless invited to speak and to use the Q&A feature for engagement. Her closing remarks likened the event to a voyage of exploration and collaboration, setting a positive and enthusiastic tone for the day's deliberations.

Introductory Remarks

Prof. Dr. Manoj Kumar Sinha, President, Indian Society of International Law

Prof. Dr. Manoj Kumar Sinha inaugurated the academic sessions by reflecting on India's long standing engagement with the Law of the Sea, tracing its evolution from early foundations such as Hugo Grotius's *Mare Liberum* to Arvid Pardo's landmark 1967 United Nations speech that shaped modern ocean governance. He highlighted India's active contributions to and implementation of UNCLOS, noting



its commitment to upholding international maritime legal frameworks. He also referred to the 2023 BBNJ Agreement, emphasizing its focus on equitable economic order and technology transfer as particularly significant for developing countries.

He further examined the interlinkages between the law of the sea, international economic order, and environmental governance, stressing the growing role of developing States in shaping these discourses. Professor Sinha underscored the need to strengthen maritime and ocean studies within higher education and legal curricula, advocating for the establishment of dedicated maritime universities. Concluding, he emphasized the value of collaboration between Indian and international institutions in advancing South Asian contributions to global maritime governance.

Keynote Address

Judge Neeru Chadha, Vice President, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), Hamburg, Germany

Judge Neeru Chadha's keynote address focused on recent developments in marine environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and the intersection of climate change with ocean law. She examined the newly adopted Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and emphasized its



mechanisms for environmental impact assessments, area-based management tools, and technology transfer to developing countries. She elaborated on the role of the BBNJ in bridging regulatory gaps in the governance of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), especially by fostering coherence among international frameworks such as ISA and IMO. Judge Chadha also highlighted the 2024 ITLOS Advisory Opinion, which clarified states' binding obligations under UNCLOS to address marine pollution caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

Her analysis underscored how climate change, ocean acidification, and sea-level rise now constitute pressing legal issues. She observed that UNCLOS functions as a "living instrument," evolving with global challenges, and called attention to international judicial bodies' growing role in ensuring environmental accountability. Her remarks concluded with optimism that the recent rulings would reinforce states' responsibilities toward climate action, environmental protection, and the equitable sharing of marine resources.





Session 1: Tackling the Triple Planetary Crisis in the Indian Ocean, Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Pollution

Moderator: Professor Ronán Long, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, World Maritime University (WMU)

Speakers:

1. **Dr. Aleke Stöfen-O'Brien**, Associate Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute (Online)
2. **Dr. Mrinalini Banerjee**, Assistant Professor, National Law University Odisha (NLUO)
3. **Dr. Chime Youdon**, Research Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, India

Rapporteur: José Manuel Pacheco Castillo, Project and Research Fellow, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute (Online)

Dr. Aleke Stöfen-O'Brien, Associate Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute (Online)

Dr. O'Brien opened the technical discussions by addressing plastic pollution within the framework of the triple planetary crisis. She highlighted the ongoing Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) process to establish a global treaty on plastic pollution and emphasized the need to integrate social justice and human dimensions, particularly the role of waste pickers into the treaty's design.



Her presentation advocated a life-cycle approach to plastics management, covering extraction, production, and disposal. She underlined that developing nations require financial and technological support to manage waste sustainably and called for fairness, inclusivity, and coherence across international environmental regimes.

Dr. Mrinalini Banerjee, Assistant Professor, National Law University Odisha (NLUO)

Dr. Banerjee's presentation offered a comprehensive analysis of the threats posed by rising sea levels, with a special focus on the Sundarbans delta and low-lying island states in the Indian Ocean. Using case studies and photographic documentation, she demonstrated the socioeconomic and ecological impacts of sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and displacement. She noted the absence of specific international legal



frameworks addressing climate-induced displacement and proposed adaptation strategies rooted in ecological restoration, smart infrastructure, and climate finance. Her recommendations stressed global cooperation, regional coordination, and local implementation to build resilience for vulnerable communities.

Dr. Chime Youdon, Research Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, India

Dr. Youdon contextualized the planetary crisis through the lens of the blue economy. She examined how the concept, though intended to align ocean development with sustainability, risks becoming another form of resource extraction if not framed within justice and equity. Her presentation called for redefining success metrics beyond GDP to include ecological and human well-being. She

advocated co-governance, nature-based solutions such as mangrove restoration, and alternative financing mechanisms as the foundation for resilient ocean economies.



Session 2: Critical Law of the Sea Challenges and Opportunities in IOR



Session 2A: Special Interest of SIDS in the Indian Ocean Region

Moderator: **Prof. Dr. Manoj Kumar Sinha**, President, Indian Society of International Law

Speakers:

1. **Mr. Suriya Narayanan Sundararajan**, PhD Candidate and Research Fellow, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Law Institute
2. **Dr. Angelique Pouponneau**, Fellowship Director & Policy and Strategy Advisor, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
3. **Ms. Tamara Thomas**, Executive Director, Ocean Ties, Seychelles

Rapporteurs: **Arundathi M S**, Teaching & Research Associate, GMU and **Sharan V** (GMU)

Mr. Suriya Narayanan Sundararajan, PhD Candidate and Research Fellow, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Law Institute

Mr. Sundararajan presented an in-depth examination of the 2025 ITLOS and ICJ advisory opinions on climate obligations, describing them as transformative milestones in international environmental jurisprudence. He explained the historical responsibility of major emitters, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and the implications of state accountability for transboundary environmental harm. He noted that the opinions reaffirmed the polluter-pays principle, strengthened customary international law, and recognized the rights of vulnerable states facing existential threats. His analysis connected these rulings to the lived realities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Indian Ocean, emphasizing the human rights dimension of climate justice.



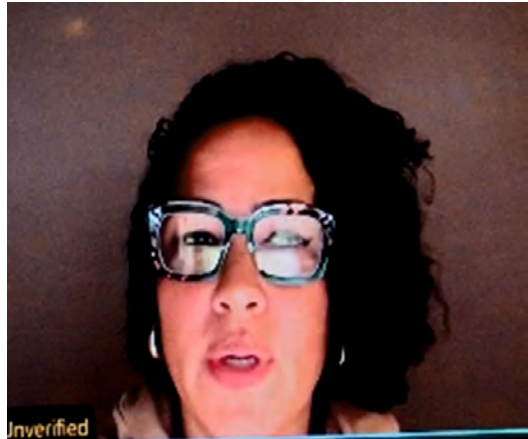
Dr. Angelique Pouponneau, Fellowship Director & Policy and Strategy Advisor, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Dr. Pouponneau explored the evolution of SIDS within international law, tracing their absence in UNCLOS to their growing recognition in subsequent instruments like the Paris Agreement and BBNJ. She analyzed the heterogeneity of SIDS in geography, economy, and culture and called for a re-examination of their “special case” status in law. By highlighting examples from the Caribbean, Pacific, and Indian Ocean, she demonstrated how SIDS’ unity and shared vulnerabilities have shaped multilateral negotiations. Her remarks stressed that recognition must translate into enforceable rights, particularly in capacity building, financing, and technology transfer.



Ms. Tamara Thomas, Executive Director, Ocean Ties, Seychelles

Ms. Thomas discussed the challenges and influence of SIDS within global negotiation blocs. Drawing from her extensive experience in BBNJ negotiations, she described how SIDS, despite limited human and financial resources, have become key players in shaping multilateral ocean governance. She emphasized the importance of unity, continuity in negotiation teams, and knowledge-sharing across regions. Her presentation showcased how SIDS' moral authority and innovative practices have strengthened global frameworks on marine biodiversity and climate resilience.



Session 2B - International Trade and Shipping

Moderator: **Dr. Pooja Bhatt**, Associate Professor & Director, Pankaj Kumar Jha Centre for Security Studies and Associate Dean Admissions, Jindal School of International Affairs

Speakers:

1. **Dr. James J Nedumpara**, Professor & Head, Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL), IIFT
2. **Dr. Beatriz Martinez Romera**, Director, Centre for Climate Change Law and Governance, University of Copenhagen (Online)
3. **Dr. Eka Higuchi**, Associate Professor, Tohoku University of Community Service and Science

Rapporteur: **Akrita Kaur**, PhD Scholar, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Dr. Pooja Bhatt, Associate Professor & Director, Pankaj Kumar Jha Centre for Security Studies and Associate Dean Admissions, Jindal School of International Affairs

Dr. Pooja Bhatt opened the session by welcoming the distinguished panelists and establishing the context for discussing critical challenges and opportunities in the Indian Ocean Region. She framed the discussion around the intersection of law of the sea principles with practical maritime trade and shipping realities. Dr. Bhatt emphasized the significance of the Indian Ocean as a critical maritime space for global trade while acknowledging the complex legal and regulatory challenges that arise from this importance. She structured the session to allow each panelist to present their perspectives before opening the floor for discussion.



Dr. James J Nedumpara, Professor & Head, Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL), IIFT

Dr. James J. Nedumpara began by underscoring the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the cornerstone of international ocean governance, outlining its role in



defining maritime zones and establishing legal frameworks for navigation, resource exploitation, environmental protection, and dispute settlement. He highlighted the specific challenges of the Indian Ocean Region, a vast and densely populated area dominated by developing coastal States, facing pressures from overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, marine pollution, and climate change. These concerns, he noted, are closely linked to Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the pursuit of a sustainable blue economy.

He further examined the broader international legal architecture relevant to ocean governance, including climate, biodiversity, and fisheries regimes, with particular focus on the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and the Agreement on Port State Measures as tools to combat harmful subsidies and IUU fishing. From an Indian perspective, he explained the division of maritime governance between the Union and the States and noted the need for possible legal reforms to align domestic law with international obligations while safeguarding fishing communities. Concluding, Dr. Nedumpara emphasized that ocean governance is a global commons challenge requiring coordinated action among coastal, flag, and port States, warning that inadequate cooperation risks a tragedy of the commons.

**Dr. Beatriz Martinez Romera, Director,
Centre for Climate Change Law and
Governance, University of Copenhagen
(Online)**

Dr. Beatriz Martinez Romera examined the intersection of international law, climate change law, and the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping. She highlighted that shipping currently accounts for around three percent of global emissions, with projections indicating substantial growth, making efficiency

measures alone insufficient to meet global climate targets. She explained the regulatory challenges posed by international shipping under the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, which have led the International Maritime Organization to assume primary responsibility. Tracing the evolution of IMO policy, she discussed the progression from early technical measures to the 2018 Initial Strategy and the 2023 Revised Strategy, which sets a net zero emissions goal around 2050 with



interim targets.

She further addressed legal and policy tensions between the principle of equal treatment of ships and differentiated responsibilities of states, noting their potential to hinder progress. Dr. Martinez Romera outlined proposed IMO measures such as fuel intensity standards and market based mechanisms, and analyzed recent advisory opinions from ITLOS and the ICJ that clarify state obligations on climate change, including due diligence and cooperation, with particular responsibilities for developed states. Although non-binding, she argued that these opinions strengthen the legal basis for ambitious climate action in shipping and are likely to influence future IMO decision making, positioning shipping as a central element of global climate governance.

Dr. Eka Higuchi, Associate Professor, Tohoku University of Community Service and Science

Dr. Eka Higuchi discussed the critical importance of ocean observation data for safe navigation, weather forecasting, and climate research, highlighting global cooperation through projects such as India's Indian Ocean Moored Buoy Network and Japan's ocean observation initiatives,



which generate publicly available data. She noted, however, that the deployment of ocean observation equipment raises complex legal and security concerns, particularly when foreign devices are placed in sensitive maritime areas. Referring to UNCLOS Article 258, she explained that while research equipment is recognized, ambiguity persists regarding its classification as "vessels" or "installations," leading to jurisdictional disputes. She further observed that coastal States face enforcement limitations when such equipment is linked to vessels enjoying sovereign immunity. Dr. Higuchi concluded by stressing the need for clearer legal definitions and regulatory frameworks to balance scientific collaboration with national sovereignty and maritime security.

Session 3 - Interests and Infrastructure in the Indian Ocean



Session 3A: Regime Interactions & Role of Non-State Actors

Moderator: **Dr. Sanjeet Ruhel**, The Nippon Foundation Lecturer on International Maritime Security Law, IMO International Maritime Law Institute, & Adjunct Professor of Law, GMU

Speakers:

1. **Capt. RS Sawan**, Senior Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
2. **Dr. Aspasia Pastra**, Assistant Professor, WMU–Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute
3. **Dr. Makoto Seta**, Associate Professor, Waseda University

Rapporteur: **Ayo Pacheco**, PhD Candidate & Research Fellow, WMU–Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

Dr. Aspasia Pastra, Assistant Professor, WMU–Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

The speaker discussed the growing role of emerging autonomous technologies in understanding and protecting marine biodiversity, while also drawing attention to the serious challenges facing ocean ecosystems. She began by explaining what marine biodiversity loss entails and highlighted how climate change, overexploitation, and lack of adequate monitoring are accelerating the decline of marine life,



particularly in vulnerable regions such as the Indian Ocean. She emphasised that despite its immense ecological importance, large parts of the Indian Ocean, especially the deep sea, remain poorly understood due to gaps in data and limited observation capabilities.

The speaker then focused on the use of autonomous technologies, such as autonomous underwater vehicles and gliders, in monitoring marine biodiversity. She explained how these technologies are transforming ocean observation by enabling long-term, deep-sea data collection, while also raising legal and governance challenges. In the Indian context, she highlighted ongoing efforts to integrate advanced technologies into national conservation frameworks and stressed the importance of aligning domestic laws with global instruments like the BBNJ Agreement. She concluded by underscoring the need for stronger regime interaction, transparency, capacity building, and technology transfer, as well as the active involvement of non-State actors, to ensure effective and science-based marine biodiversity conservation.

Dr. Makoto Seta, Associate Professor, Waseda University

The speaker reflected on the increasing strain on Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), especially in addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and the steady depletion of fish stocks. He began by explaining the basic framework of international fisheries law and the role RFMOs play within it, pointing out that although



these bodies are central to fisheries governance, they often struggle with poor compliance and concerns about their authority. He noted that continued overfishing and weak enforcement have eroded confidence in RFMOs, limiting their ability to manage fisheries effectively.

He then turned to ways in which RFMOs can be reinforced through stronger links with other international legal regimes and the involvement of non-State actors. He highlighted how instruments such as the Port State Measures Agreement and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies support RFMO measures by curbing port access and financial support for vessels engaged in IUU fishing. He also emphasised the contribution of NGOs and monitoring initiatives like Global Fishing Watch in enhancing transparency and sharing critical data. He concluded by underlining that sustained cooperation across regimes, combined with support from non-State actors, is essential for improving the effectiveness and legitimacy of RFMOs.

Capt. RS Sawan, Senior Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi

The speaker examined the growing influence of non-State actors in the management of ocean resources and the legal challenges this creates, particularly in areas such as seabed mining, fisheries, and maritime security. He explained that non-State actors can play constructive roles through advocacy, innovation, and support, but can also disrupt existing governance structures. Highlighting

developments in deep-seabed mining, he pointed to the rapid expansion of exploration activities and major commercial assessments, while noting the legal uncertainty caused by the absence of a finalized Mining Code under the International Seabed Authority.

He then discussed the legal and practical tensions arising from non-State actor involvement at sea, including the balance between lawful activities under UNCLOS and the right to protest. He referred to the roles of fishermen's groups, industry actors, private security, and monitoring initiatives, as well as ongoing concerns such as bycatch, ghost fishing, and fragmented regulation. He concluded by emphasising that as technology increases the reach and capacity of non-State actors, it is essential to close legal gaps, strengthen best practices, and better harmonise the law of the sea with other legal regimes.





Session 3B: Critical Ocean Infrastructure

Moderator: **Capt. Sarabjeet S Parmar** (Retd. Indian Navy), Distinguished Fellow, Council for Strategic and Defence Research

Speakers:

1. **Mr. Tomoyuki Yoshida**, Chief Executive Director, Japan Institute of International Affairs
2. **Ms. Sonali Mukherjee**, Project Consultant, Strategy & Transactions, Ernst & Young LLP)
3. **Ms. Jeonghee Lim**, Senior Research Associate, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Rapporteur: **Capt. Athena Kanyana Linda P. Tanejo**, Legal Officer, Office of the Judge Advocate General, Armed Forces of the Philippines

Moderator's Opening Remarks

Captain Sarabjeet introduced the session by highlighting the indispensable role and vulnerability of the Indian Ocean region's undersea infrastructure, including submarine cables and pipelines central to global communication and energy supplies. He emphasized the urgency of addressing threats from both accidental damage and deliberate hostile actions amid complex jurisdictional challenges.

Tomoyuki Yoshida, Chief Executive Director, Japan Institute of International Affairs

Mr. Yoshida highlighted the critical strategic importance of undersea cables, which carry most global digital communications and financial transactions, and noted their concentration in geopolitically sensitive maritime zones. He discussed recent incidents of damage and sabotage, often attributed to covert state actors, and described stealth tactics such as disabling AIS



transponders and using cable cutting equipment. Critiquing the inadequacy of existing legal frameworks such as the 1884 Cable Protection Convention and UNCLOS, he emphasized weak domestic implementation, enforcement challenges, and complications arising from flags of convenience and private ownership. He concluded by calling for stronger national legislation, a new international convention criminalizing cable sabotage, enhanced regional cooperation, and legal frameworks to deter state sponsored disruptions.

Sonali Mukherjee, Project Consultant, Strategy & Transactions, Ernst & Young LLP)

Mukherjee focused on Vessel Tracking Systems' essential role in maritime safety, security, and economic optimization. She elucidated India's national strategy, marked by the 2025 launch of Visakhapatnam's integrated VTS platform combining AIS, radar, and CCTV systems, complemented by BIMSTEC regional cooperation. She recounted escalating cyber threats to



VTs and port infrastructure globally, listing attacks on ports in Antwerp, Singapore, and Indian gateways. Her detailed overview included IMO SOLAS provisions identifying VTs as critical infrastructure, cybersecurity guidelines, and technology modernization driven by international best practices.

She examined national legal frameworks supporting VTs in India, the UK, Norway, and Singapore, addressing gaps such as fragmented systems, shortage of operators, and training needs. Mukherjee proposed adopting AI-driven anomaly detection resistant to quantum threats, comprehensive legal frameworks explicitly addressing AI and cyber risks, and enhanced international collaboration for capacity building.

Jeonghee Lim, Senior Research Associate, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Lim highlighted the growing threats to undersea cables and pipelines from both accidental damage and deliberate covert actions by state and non-state actors, emphasizing their critical role in carrying global data flows and energy supplies. She described the use of gray zone tactics that exploit legal ambiguities between peace and conflict, combining maritime, cyber, and economic tools under plausible deniability, particularly in strategic regions such as the Baltic Sea and the Taiwan Strait.



She identified gaps in existing legal frameworks, including UNCLOS and the 1884 Cable Protection Convention, noting their limited preventive focus and unequal treatment of cables and pipelines. To address these challenges, Lim called for stronger multilateral cooperation, enhanced national protection measures, and closer public private coordination, alongside technical solutions such as improved vessel tracking, underwater monitoring systems, rapid repair capabilities, and integrated maritime domain awareness to strengthen resilience against emerging security risks.

Session 4: Emerging Regulatory Issues in the region



Session 4A - Ratification and Implementation of the BBNJ Agreement

Moderator: **Professor Maria Gavouneli**, Professor of International Law, Athens Public International Law Centre, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens

Speakers:

1. **Dr. Rizza Sacra-Dejucos**, Asia Regional Coordinator, High Seas Alliance
2. **Dr. Siva Thambisetty**, Associate Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science
3. **Dr. Kahlil Hassanali**, Senior Research Officer, Institute of Marine Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago

Rapporteur: **Ms. Mili Trivedi**, Teaching & Research Associate, Gujarat Maritime University

Moderator's Opening Remarks

Professor Maria Gavouneli warmly welcomed panelists and participants. She framed the session as critical in the BBNJ Agreement's journey, at a decisive

moment where the treaty had surpassed the necessary 60 ratifications on 19 September 2025, triggering a 120-day countdown to its entry into force expected in January 2026. Gavouneli underlined that ratification is merely the diplomatic beginning; the main challenge lies in operationalizing the treaty through institutional creation, harmonizing legal and procedural mechanisms, and addressing anticipated and unforeseen implementation challenges. She acknowledged that complex debates from the negotiation phase may persist but urged goodwill and cooperation for success. She invited each panelist to deliver comprehensive presentations approximately 30 minutes each, followed by discussion.

Dr. Rizza Sacra-Dejucos, Asia Regional Coordinator, High Seas Alliance

Dr. Rizza Sacra-Dejucos explained that the BBNJ Agreement is close to entering into force, with 57 ratifications already deposited and further instruments expected at the UN General Assembly in September 2025. She outlined progress made by the Preparatory Commission since June 2024, including institutional structuring and planning for the first COP. She described the treaty's governance framework, with the COP at its apex supported by bodies such as the Access and Benefit-Sharing Committee, Implementation and Compliance Committee, Scientific and Technical Body, Finance Committee, and Secretariat, while noting ongoing debates on rules of procedure, observer participation, and the need for adequate financial support to ensure participation of SIDS and LDCs.



Dr. Siva Thambisetty, Associate Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science

Dr. Thambisetty highlighted the timeliness of her intervention as the BBNJ Agreement moves from signature to ratification, focusing on Part II concerning marine genetic resources and benefit sharing. She



emphasized the significant role of developing countries in shaping much of the consensus text, presenting it as a major Global South achievement in advancing equity in the governance of global commons. She discussed the challenges surrounding Digital Sequence Information, noting that the BBNJ Agreement is the first binding treaty to address it without a precise definition, creating both flexibility and implementation challenges.

A central feature of her presentation was the Batch Identifier system, a novel mechanism linking physical marine genetic samples to digital data across databases, research, patents, and products, enabling transparency and both monetary and non monetary benefit sharing. She also highlighted strengthened provisions on technology transfer that impose clearer state responsibilities. Dr. Thambisetty concluded by stressing that effective implementation requires strong global coordination rather than extensive domestic legal reform, active engagement in preparatory and COP processes, and coherent governance strategies, characterizing the BBNJ Agreement as a transformative step in access and benefit sharing governance.

Dr. Kahlil Hassanali, Senior Research Officer, Institute of Marine Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago

Dr. Hassanali's presentation drew on institutional design lessons from the International Seabed Authority's Legal and Technical Commission to inform the structure and functioning of the BBNJ Agreement's Scientific and Technical Body. He outlined the STB's advisory mandate under Article 49, including review of environmental impact assessments, advice on area-based management tools, and



reporting to the COP, highlighting clear functional similarities with the ISA LTC and the value of leveraging its decades of operational experience.

He recommended limiting STB membership to around twenty-five members with equitable regional representation, five-year terms with one renewal to preserve institutional memory, and a multidisciplinary composition spanning science, law, traditional knowledge, and social disciplines. Emphasizing transparency and inclusivity, he advocated open meetings, full translation support, equitable geographic representation, and sustained funding for

developing States. Decision-making should prioritize consensus, with voting and minority opinions as safeguards. He concluded by framing the STB's design as a generational opportunity to modernize global ocean governance through inclusivity, transparency, and adaptability.



Session 4B - Autonomous Shipping

Moderator: Dr. Sumathy Permal, Maritime Institute of Malaysia

Speakers:

1. **Cdr Abhimanyu Singh**, Indian Navy
2. **Dr. Su Wai Mon**, Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore
3. **Prof. Mayank Suri**, Assistant Professor, OP Jindal Global University

Rapporteur: Mr. Rahul Desarda, Lecturer, O.P. Jindal Global University

Moderator's Opening Remarks

Dr. Sumathy Permal introduced the topic of autonomous shipping as an emerging technological frontier with profound operational, legal, ethical, and

cybersecurity implications. She framed the dialogue to explore regulatory frameworks, technological challenges, and development pathways for integrating unmanned systems in naval and commercial domains.

Cdr Abhimanyu Singh, Indian Navy

Commander Singh addressed the terminological and regulatory ambiguities surrounding naval unmanned vessels, contrasting them with the clearer commercial framework under the IMO's Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS). He highlighted the military advantages of unmanned platforms, including reduced risk to personnel, enhanced endurance, and improved covert capabilities. He identified a key legal challenge in determining whether unmanned naval vessels qualify as warships under Article 29 of UNCLOS, which would grant them immunity and navigational rights. Noting the lack of consensus among States, illustrated by the 2016 seizure of a U.S. unmanned underwater vehicle by China, he also raised ethical and operational concerns such as automation bias and AI-related errors. Commander Singh emphasized the need for internationally agreed classification standards, robust safety and cybersecurity frameworks, and clearly defined liability regimes for operators, manufacturers, and developers.



Dr. Su Wai Mon, Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore

Dr. Su Wai Mon outlined the ongoing initiatives of the International Maritime Organization shaping the regulatory framework for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS), explaining the four levels of autonomy ranging from conventionally crewed vessels to fully autonomous systems, and identifying core technologies such as automated navigation, engine control, collision



avoidance, and AI-based decision support. He emphasized the significant cybersecurity risks associated with autonomous and remotely operated vessels due to their reliance on interconnected and internet-enabled IT and operational technology systems, which are vulnerable to cascading failures, citing incidents such as the 2017 Maersk cyberattack and recurring cyber breaches at major ports. Highlighting existing regulatory gaps, he noted limitations in addressing legacy fleets, fragmented national approaches, and insufficient cybersecurity provisions within emerging MASS codes, and called for greater awareness, improved incident reporting, targeted investment, workforce capacity building, and stronger international regulatory harmonization.

Prof. Mayank Suri, Assistant Professor, OP Jindal Global University

Prof. Mayank Suri delivered a visionary presentation urging the maritime autonomous sector to prioritize environmental sustainability over purely economic gains, using vivid metaphors, including references to *Squid Game*, to highlight the high stakes involved. He argued that autonomous shipping must provide genuine ecological and social benefits, particularly for developing countries



that remain major labor hubs, and advocated an ecocentric approach inspired by thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi and Rachel Carson. Critiquing regulatory capture and the exclusion of marginalized voices, he warned against the forced adoption of autonomous technologies without shared benefits. He proposed practical reforms including flexible and relational shipping contracts, decentralized arbitration mechanisms, and climate finance tools such as carbon credits, calling for innovative and inclusive legal frameworks to ensure a just and sustainable maritime future.

Keynote Address



**Dr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna, Director,
Marine Policy Centre,
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute**



**Dr. Charlie Garnjana- Goonchorn,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Thailand**

Dr. Ramakrishna underscored India's leadership in ocean governance by highlighting its historical contributions to maritime law and outlining the four pillars of India's Blue Ocean Strategy, stewardship, resilience, inclusive growth, and safeguarded financing while emphasizing cooperation over competition and linking environmental justice with human dignity. Complementing this perspective, Dr. Charlie Garnjana-Goonchorn from Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared insights into regional developments in national ocean governance, noting progress in enforcement measures, efforts to combat illegal fishing, and the adoption of Thailand's National Maritime Security Plan, while identifying future priorities such as BBNJ ratification, addressing climate change impacts, and advancing the Global Plastic Treaty.

Cultural Evening

The Conference concluded with a vibrant Cultural Programme by the LL.M. students of Gujarat Maritime University, Batch 2025–26. The evening was a celebration of India's rich traditions — from the graceful Thiruvathira of Kerala and soulful Bollywood semi-classical, to the elegance of Kathak and divine beauty of Bharatanatyam. The stage then lit up with the festive rhythms of Garba from Gujarat and closed with the electrifying beats of Bhangra from Punjab.

The performances beautifully captured how culture transcends borders, weaving together devotion, artistry, and joy into one unforgettable evening leaving the international delegates truly amazed and appreciative of India's cultural vibrancy.



Day 3: Thursday 11 September 2025

Session Name: Housekeeping Remarks

Master of Ceremony: Dr. Abhay Singh, Director (SMLPA), Gujarat Maritime University

The speaker reminded that each speaker during the panels is allocated 15 minutes and urged all speakers to strictly adhere to this time limit. Moderators were requested to actively ensure speakers stay within their allotted 15 minutes. Additionally, all question-and-answer sessions are scheduled at the end of each panel, with approximately 15 to 20 minutes reserved for audience questions.

Attendees were encouraged to note down their questions during the presentations and raise them during the designated Q&A time only. To maintain a disturbance-free environment, everyone was requested to keep their phones on silent mode and to step out quietly if necessary. The organizers expressed gratitude for the participants' cooperation and engagement, anticipating insightful and timely sessions ahead.



Welcome Address and Reflection of Conference

Speaker: **Prof. James Kraska**, Chair, Stockton centre for International Law, USNWC

Rapporteur: **Ms. Mili Trivedi**, Teaching & Research Associate, Gujarat Maritime University

On the third day of the 48th Conference on Oceans Law and Policy (COLP), Prof. James Kraska, on behalf of the Stockton Center for International Law at the U.S. Naval War College, welcomed participants and emphasized COLP's global stature as a leading forum on the law of the sea and maritime policy. He acknowledged the vital contributions of partner institutions, including



Gujarat Maritime University, World Maritime University, the Korea Maritime Institute, the Japan Institute of International Affairs, the Nippon Foundation, and the National Centre for the Sea and Maritime Law. He also highlighted the Naval War College's longstanding legacy and the Stockton Center's engagement with contemporary challenges in international law, maritime security, and emerging technologies, including its academic collaborations in India.

Prof. Kraska further noted the international reach of the Center's flagship publication, "International Law Studies", and its authoritative reference works such as "The Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations and The Newport Manual on the Law of Naval Warfare". He reflected on COLP's tradition of global collaboration and encouraged participants to engage actively in the sessions, underscoring the oceans' importance to global connectivity, security, and sustainability, while wishing all a productive third day at the conference.

Keynote Address

Amb. Arif Havas Oegroseno, Vice Minister, Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

Amb. Arif Havas Oegroseno, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, shared Indonesia's unique geographic position as the world's largest archipelagic state with coastlines on both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. He outlined Indonesia's primary interests in the Indian Ocean: geostrategy, economic development, and sustainability. He emphasized the Indian Ocean's importance as a global



trade corridor, marked by increased military presence and the need for continued peace and stability. Economic interests include freedom of navigation, fisheries as critical protein sources, and future economic use of extended continental shelves. Sustainability concerns focus on overfishing, climate change impacts, and disaster preparedness. Amb. Arif Havas Oegroseno underscored the necessity of strengthening regional cooperation institutions like IORA, addressing disparities in fishing rights and enforcement, and fostering South-South partnerships to enhance equity, sustainability, and shared prosperity in Indian Ocean governance.

Prof. Maximo Q. Mejia, President, World Maritime University

Professor Maximo Q. Mejia, President of the World Maritime University, expressed honour in addressing COLP 48 held in New Delhi, affirming WMU's long-standing partnership with COLP and commitment to advancing maritime governance globally. He highlighted the significance of hosting COLP in the Indian subcontinent and the volume of maritime activity and population in the Indian Ocean region.



Prof. Mejia stressed urgent challenges such as climate change, marine pollution, illegal fishing, and biodiversity loss, while underscoring opportunities through sustainable development and maritime security. He recalled the foundational role of Indian maritime leaders in establishing WMU and acknowledged India's substantial alumni presence at the university. Prof. Mejia encouraged ongoing regional cooperation, legal innovation, and practical measures to address the triple planetary crisis threatening ocean health and to harness the promise of sustainable development for future generations.



Session 5: Mineral Resources and Maritime Security in the IOR



Session 5A: Seabed Mineral Mining

Moderator: **Dr. Gabriela Argüello**, Associate Senior Lecturer, Department of Law, University of Gothenburg

Speakers:

1. **Mr. Amiel Ian Valdez**, Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore
2. **Dr. Rahul Sharma**, Chief Scientist (Retired), CSIR – National Institute of Oceanography
3. **Dr. R Venkatesan**, Scientist and Professor, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai
4. **Dr. Pradeep Singh**, Ocean Governance Expert, Azul Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal (Online)

Rapporteurs: **Dominique Virgil**, Foreign Services Officer (Third Secretary), Directorate of Legal Affairs and Territorial Treaties, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

Amiel Ian Valdez, Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore

The session began with the moderator introducing the first speaker, Mr. Amiel Ian Valdez, Research Fellow at CIL, who highlighted that seabed mining has long been a contentious issue. He traced its origins to the 1970s UNCLOS negotiations, when it was viewed as a means for developing countries to gain equitable access to resources under the principle of the “common heritage of mankind,” and outlined the session’s



focus on the legal, environmental, scientific, and technological dimensions of seabed mining. Mr. Valdez noted that seabed mining today is far more complex, shaped by geopolitical interests, environmental concerns, and energy transition goals. His presentation examined the precautionary principle and environmental impact assessments in deep seabed mining beyond national jurisdiction, drawing insights from judicial review and developments in climate change law.

Dr. Rahul Sharma, Chief Scientist (Retired), CSIR – National Institute of Oceanography

Dr. Rahul Sharma was the second speaker. His speech explained why seabed minerals are being explored and why this background is important for lawmakers and policymakers. He established that seabed mineral resources may become crucial for future energy transitions and industrial growth as land reserves decline. However, he added that their use must be carefully regulated to balance economic needs, strategic interests, and environmental protection.



Dr. R Venkatesan, Scientist and Professor, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai

Dr. R. Venkatesan highlighted the ocean's role as the "blue lung" of the Earth and its centrality to Sustainable Development Goal 14. He emphasized the need for science-driven policies and legal frameworks as marine resources including oil, gas, fisheries, polymetallic nodules, and genetic resources face increasing exploitation. Referring to India's Deep Ocean Mission and international scientific



collaborations, he noted that much of the deep ocean remains poorly understood despite its vulnerability, particularly for small island and coastal communities. He raised concerns over marine litter, ghost nets, and climate impacts on deep-sea ecosystems, stressing the limitations of current scientific models due to data gaps. Concluding, Dr. Venkatesan called for a strong science-policy-law nexus, supported by tools such as environmental impact assessments and ocean accounting, to balance exploitation with conservation and ensure sustainable management of deep-sea resources for future generations..

Dr. Pradeep Singh, Ocean Governance Expert, Azul Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal (Online)

His presentation reviewed the status of ISA Mining Code negotiations and related developments. It outlined the ISA's mandate under UNCLOS, its organs, and its broader responsibilities beyond regulation. While 30 exploration contracts are active, no exploitation has begun, partly due to unresolved regulations. The two-year rule (invoked in 2021) increased pressure but consensus has not been



reached. Recent developments include U.S. domestic licensing moves and growing calls from nearly 40 countries for a moratorium citing environmental

and equity concerns. Negotiations on the Mining Code have advanced, but critical annexes, standards, and guidelines remain unfinished. He concluded by saying that the ISA has adopted a thematic roadmap to address environmental, financial, regulatory, and governance issues, highlighting the significant work still ahead to balance resource use and protection of the common heritage of humankind.



Session 5B: Maritime Security and Legal Challenges

Moderator: **Commander Christopher Hutton**, JAGC, Stockton Centre for International Law

Speakers:

1. **Dr. Young Kil Park**, Director, International Marine Affairs and Territory Research Centre, Korea Maritime Institute.
2. **Ms. Dita Liliansa**, Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore
3. **Prof. Ademuni-Odeke**, Leading Researcher at Ankara University National Centre for the Sea and Maritime Law

Rapporteurs: **Insha Baba**, Scholar, Rajiv Gandhi National Law University, Patiala

Dr. Young Kil Park, Director, International Marine Affairs and Territory Research Centre, Korea Maritime Institute.

Dr. Young Kil Park's presentation focused on China's 2025 declaration of multiple no-sail zones in the Yellow Sea and examined their basis under the international law of the sea. He outlined how these zones, which overlapped with South Korea's EEZ and often lacked sufficient notification, raised concerns of excessive restrictions on navigation. Dr. Park argued that while temporary no-sail zones may be permissible for military activities, broad or prolonged restrictions could conflict with the principles of freedom of navigation and the balance UNCLOS seeks to maintain between coastal and user states. The absence of notifications to both the IMO and directly affected neighbors like South Korea highlighted procedural weaknesses that might undermine navigational safety and multilateral trust. In his legal assessment, repeated and uncooperative unilateral acts could be seen as jeopardizing ongoing maritime delimitation negotiations, in violation of Article 74, paragraph 3 of UNCLOS.



Dita Liliansa, Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore

Turning to Southeast Asia, Dita Liliansa analysed the ASEAN region's approach to maritime security. She explained that ASEAN's core "sovereignty-first" principle, a legacy of colonial experiences, leads to a preference for consensus and soft-law instruments over binding commitments. As a result, ASEAN generates non-binding declarations and action plans, but real coordination and effective enforcement remain limited. Ms. Liliansa used the 2015 Rohingya migrant crisis and ongoing issues of modern slavery in capture fisheries as primary examples. The region's fragmented treaty participation means crises are typically



approached through the lens of law enforcement such as anti-smuggling or anti-trafficking rather than as humanitarian or refugee issues. She noted some progress with the 2023 ASEAN Declaration on Protection of Migrant Fishers but emphasized the need for operational mechanisms and stronger institutional frameworks to move from dialogue to concrete action.

Prof. Ademuni-Odeke, Leading Researcher at Ankara University National Centre for the Sea and Maritime Law

Professor Ademuni-Odeke spoke about the special security challenges of the Indian Ocean Rim, a region marked by its demographic weight, strategic shipping routes, and persistent instability from local conflicts, piracy, and terrorism. He highlighted that North West IOR's chronic insecurity is driven by both internal weaknesses and external military rivalries. Professor Odeke argued that regional cooperation, such as through the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and capacity building among littoral states are essential to counter these threats. However, he pointed out that the region does not lack institutions, but needs a clear leader—suggesting that India, given its geopolitical stature, is best placed to steer regional security initiatives. Drawing on the example of multinational collaboration that suppressed Somali piracy, Odeke argued that coordinated naval efforts, capacity upgrades, and robust information sharing remain the best templates for managing evolving security threats.



Session 6: Legal Frontiers: New Technologies, Fisheries and Food Security



Session 6A: Emerging Technologies and Artificial Intelligence in the Ocean

Moderator: **Dr. Manimuthu Gandhi**, Vice President, Indian Society of International Law

Speakers:

1. **Capt. (Dr.) Gurpreet Khurana**, Indian Navy (Retd.), Professor, Naval War College (NWC), Goa
2. **Dr. Tafsir Matin Johansson**, Associate Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute
3. **Rehana Dhawade**, Legal Consultant, DG Shipping

Rapporteurs: **Azry Almi Kaloko**, Analyst, Atlas Institute

Capt. (Dr.) Gurpreet Khurana, Indian Navy (Retd.), Professor, Naval War College (NWC), Goa

Capt. Dr. Gurpreet Khurana, the first speaker, concentrated on “hard” maritime security and how new technologies, especially unmanned and autonomous

maritime systems are raising novel legal and operational questions under international law. He described how the introduction of unmanned systems complicates traditional rules of engagement, citing real-world cases such as Indian and US drones encountering hostile acts at sea. The presentation drew attention to the unresolved issue of whether destruction or seizure of such systems should trigger a right of self-defence, as well as the legal and practical difficulties in ordering autonomous vehicles to comply with instructions. Khurana also touched on lethal autonomous weapon systems, emphasizing the near-consensus for banning them due to persistent ethical and liability concerns. However, he noted that evolving definitions, especially by powerful states, often dilute the scope of these prohibitions, leaving key questions about liability and the adequacy of international law in the face of accelerating technological change.



Dr. Tafsir Matin Johansson, Associate Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

Dr. Tafsir Matin Johansson's presentation focused on the environmental risks presented by emerging marine technology. He warned that pollution resulting from abandoned or malfunctioning marine hardware like remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), or batteries could exacerbate existing ocean litter problems. Dr. Johansson described current legal ambiguities, such as whether futuristic marine technologies qualify as "vessels" under existing maritime conventions and the difficulties of enforcing liability on the high seas, especially as technology outpaces regulations. While some legal analogies and single-case precedents exist, he advocated for flexible and layered liability regimes that account for fault, organizational responsibility, and even strict liability for producers. He stressed that these solutions must balance accountability with the need to foster innovation and scientific progress.



Rehana Dhawade, Legal Consultant, DG Shipping

The third speaker, Rehana Dhawade, shifted the focus from liability to governance challenges, particularly from the perspective of a major seafaring nation like India. She discussed the legal and practical uncertainty introduced by the integration of AI and autonomous systems into maritime sectors, noting the difficulties in defining operators, adapting current conventions, and addressing cyber risks and workforce readiness. Dhawade outlined India's response, particularly the 2025 Merchant Shipping Act, which incorporates provisions for digital compliance, broadens vessel definitions, and enables swift policy adaptation to emerging technologies. Regional leadership and regulatory modernization, she argued, must be paired with rapid upskilling and inclusive international partnerships to ensure effective governance in the digital age.



Session 6B: Fisheries and Food Security

Moderator: **Capt. (Retd.) Jesus A Menacho Pierola**, Founder and President, The Nautical Maritime Foundation of Peru (FUNDAMAR)

Speakers:

1. **John J Vachaparambil**, Associate Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
2. **Dr. Kathleen Auld**, Lecturer, World Maritime University
3. **Prof. Vito De Lucia**, Professor, UiT Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea (NCLOS), Norway

Rapporteur: **Arundathi M S**, Teaching & Research Associate, Gujarat Maritime University

John J Vachaparambil, Associate Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi

The speaker briefly discussed how climate change is causing fish stocks to migrate and the resulting challenges this creates for marine fisheries governance. He highlighted that rising sea surface temperatures, ocean warming, deoxygenation, and acidification are already disrupting marine ecosystems, resulting in significant shifts in the distribution and abundance of fish stocks. Drawing



attention to global experiences such as the Cod Wars, the Southern Bluefin Tuna dispute, and the Mackerel War, he explained how climate-driven fish migration has the potential to trigger maritime boundary disputes, violations of sovereign rights, and conflicts among States, particularly in regions with contested or sensitive maritime zones.

With specific reference to India, the speaker discussed how climate change is altering species composition and fishing patterns, noting examples such as the migration of Indian oil sardine, mackerel, and false trevally, including movements across international maritime boundaries. He examined the resulting legal challenges under international frameworks such as UNCLOS, CITES, and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, as well as under India's domestic fisheries laws. The speaker emphasized that existing legal and regulatory regimes are ill equipped to address these dynamic changes and stressed the need for adaptive, forward-looking legal reforms and enhanced regional cooperation to ensure sustainable fisheries management and the protection of fishers' livelihoods in a changing climate.

Dr. Kathleen Auld, Lecturer, World Maritime University

The speaker discussed how international trade agreements shape the subsidisation of small-scale fisheries and how subsidies affect both fish production and supply. She noted that global fisheries subsidies are substantial, with many being capacity-enhancing and harmful, leading to problems such as overfishing, overcapacity, IUU fishing, market distortions, and threats to food security.



She also highlighted that these subsidies often favour industrial fleets, deepening regional and sectoral inequalities and causing disadvantage to small-scale fishers.

Focusing on the Indian Ocean Rim, the speaker showed that most subsidies flow to the industrial sector, while a significant share of support to small-scale fisheries remains harmful. Using examples from Ghana, Indonesia, and India, she explained how fuel and other subsidies have contributed to stock depletion and growing dependency among fishers. She concluded by stressing the need for more responsible and well-targeted subsidies, calling on States to use transition periods under trade agreements to reform subsidy schemes in ways that support sustainability, curb IUU fishing, and improve social outcomes for small-scale fishing communities.

Prof. Vito De Lucia, Professor, UiT Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea (NCLOS), Norway

The speaker examined the concept of objections in international law, focusing on their importance in fisheries management and their inclusion in the BBNJ Agreement. He noted that objections are rooted in State consent and can take different forms, such as objections during voting, persistent objections to customary law, or objections to specific declarations. In the context of fisheries governance, he



described how Regional Fisheries Management Organizations allow member States to opt out of certain conservation measures under limited conditions, while also requiring safeguards like review mechanisms and alternative measures to protect conservation goals.

Turning to the BBNJ Agreement, the speaker outlined how States may object to decisions on marine protected areas and other management tools, even though consensus remains the preferred approach. He cautioned that while objection procedures serve a legal purpose, their excessive or unfounded use across both RFMOs and the BBNJ framework could undermine cooperation and weaken effective ocean governance.



Session 7: Maritime Boundaries and International Dispute Settlement



Moderator: **Deepak Shetty**, IRS (Retd), Former Secretary to the Government of India & Director General of Shipping, Ministry of Shipping

Speakers:

1. **Ángeles Jiménez García-Carriazo**, Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow, University of Cadiz
2. **Dr. Manimuthu Gandhi**, Vice President, Indian Society of International Law
3. **Yusuke Honda**, Associate Professor, Kobe University

Rapporteur: **Febryani Sabatira**, Intern, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

Dr. Ángeles Jiménez García-Carriazo, Ramon y Cajal Research Fellow, University of Cadiz

Dr. Ángeles Jiménez García-Carriazo explored the “statement of understanding” or “Bengal rule,” a unique legal mechanism designed to address the

geographical inequities experienced by states bordering the Bay of Bengal in securing extended continental shelf claims. The mechanism allows nations with unusually narrow shelves and thick sediment cover to establish their continental margin's outer edge by using modified sediment thickness formulas rather than strict reliance on the foot of the slope. Dr. Jimenez traced its evolution from a regional fix to a



flexible legal tool now invoked as far afield as Kenya and Spain. The presentation highlighted the ambiguity surrounding its exact legal status, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf's (CLCS) increasing but technically non-binding interpretive role, and the challenges such as lateral boundary determination and the paradox of having to use Article 76 formulas even when their inequity is the basis for invoking the statement. She emphasized the risks arising from growing legal creativity among states and reaffirmed that only concerted action by the UN or states parties can fully clarify the rule's scope.

Dr. Manimuthu Gandhi, Vice President, Indian Society of International Law

The third speaker Dr. Manimuthu Gandhi's presentation followed with an emphasis on the procedural and substantive role of the CLCS in examining claims for maritime boundaries and the outer limit of the continental shelf. He noted the practical problems in both the finalization and implementation of recommendations, as only a minority of CLCS recommendations have resulted



in final and binding boundaries. Gandhi discussed the inherent disagreements between coastal states and the CLCS, inconsistencies in legal interpretations, and the enduring challenge of overlapping and unilateral claims. He reviewed established delimitation practices, such as median and equidistance lines and the equity-based adjustments observed in decades of jurisprudence across the ICJ and ITLOS. Gandhi pointed out the evolution of these practices beyond the classic three-stage delimitation and highlighted persistent ambiguities in both

legal criteria and practical execution, noting the disconnect between legal solutions and the realities of boundary enforcement and stakeholder buy-in, especially concerning natural resources and fisheries.

Yusuke Honda, Associate Professor, Kobe University

Yusuke Honda's remarks focused on the implications of climate change, particularly sea level rise, for maritime boundary stability. He detailed the large number of unresolved maritime boundaries, especially in Africa and Asia, and analysed how rising sea levels threaten to alter baselines and shift physical coastlines inland, potentially transforming the maritime entitlements of affected states. Honda



discussed relevant international jurisprudence, noting the legal uncertainty around whether boundaries must be adjusted in response to such changes. He argued that the prevailing trend is to uphold the finality of previously agreed or adjudicated maritime boundaries, but also suggested that states might adopt general or bilateral legal resolutions to account for evolving physical realities, especially to deal with the challenges posed by disappearing land features.

Session 8: Future Ocean Governance in the Indian ocean



Moderator: **Prof. Surabhi Ranganathan**, Professor of International Law, University of Cambridge

Speakers:

1. **Ms. Anum Khan**, Associate Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, India
2. **Dr. Vonintsoa Rafaly**, Postdoctoral Fellow, WMU–Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute
3. **Dr. Ríán Derrig**, Assistant Professor, WMU–Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute

Rapporteur: **Ms. Mili Trivedi**, Teaching & Research Associate, Gujarat Maritime University

Anum Khan, Associate Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, India

Anum Khan began with a focused analysis of non-traditional security threats in the Western Indian Ocean, especially along the East African coast. She described the region's vast maritime wealth juxtaposed with persistent risks including piracy, illegal fishing, human trafficking, and environmental degradation. Khan emphasized the complex, interlinked nature of these threats, exacerbated by



poor governance, weak enforcement, and violent non-state actors such as Al-Shabaab and Houthi militias. Despite these challenges, she highlighted regional frameworks like the African Integrated Maritime Strategy and the Lomé Charter, underscoring the urgent need for securitization framing maritime issues as security threats to justify coordinated responses. However, she stressed that many countries lack national maritime security strategies and harmonized information sharing, limiting effective maritime governance. Her presentation concluded with calls for local threat identification, strategic planning, and building institutional capacities, especially for maritime situational awareness and law enforcement.

Dr. Vonintsoa Rafaly, Postdoctoral Fellow, World Maritime University-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute (Online)

Dr. Vonintsoa Rafaly then discussed the dynamic, agentic role of law in shaping desirable and equitable futures for ocean governance. She argued that law is not passive but an active force that shapes social and ecological realities through norms, institutions, and processes. Drawing on examples from the Indian Ocean, she highlighted how existing legal frameworks, like Marine Protected



Areas, while beneficial for biodiversity, often impose burdens on artisanal fishers, creating tensions between global conservation goals and local livelihoods. Dr,

Rafaly spotlighted successful customary marine governance practices, such as Madagascar's Dina and Indonesia's sasi systems, advocating for the recognition and integration of informal and traditional governance mechanisms alongside formal law. She concluded that adaptive, inclusive law must bridge formal and informal systems and operate flexibly across political, social, and ecological contexts to steer ocean futures sustainably and justly.

Dr. Rián Derrig, Assistant Professor, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute (Online)

The final speaker, Dr. Rián Derrig, presented an early-stage research project on a novel legal framework called "international redistributive law." He traced the historical decline and recent resurgence of future studies as a discipline aimed at shaping social futures. Dr. Derrig argued that contemporary international law increasingly incorporates redistributive concepts such as capacity building, technology transfer, and benefit sharing to address global economic inequalities. Using examples like the BBNJ Agreement, he emphasized how these legal concepts are elaborated both in treaty texts and through iterative multilateral Conference of Parties (COP) decisions. Dr. Derrig connected this body of law to the broader history of transnational social democratic efforts and highlighted the significant ongoing role of Global South countries in driving these principles forward. His reflections underscored the importance of training negotiators cross-sectorally and the risks involved when capacity building is outsourced to private actors rather than public institutions. He emphasized that recognizing international redistributive law as a coherent field could improve coherence across environmental and ocean governance regimes.



Concluding Ceremony

Speakers:

1. **Prof. Dr. S Shanthakumar**, Provost, Gujarat Maritime University
2. **Prof. Maximo Q Mejia**, President, World Maritime University
3. **Shri. Pankaj Joshi (IAS)**, President, Gujarat Maritime University and Chief Secretary to the Government of Gujarat
4. **Prof. Ronán Long**, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, WMU
5. **Cdr. Christopher Hutton** Judge Advocate General Corps, Stockholm Centre for International Law, U.S. Naval War College
6. **Amb. Arif Havas Oegroseno**, Vice Minister, Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

Rapporteur: Ms. Shalini, Assistant Professor, Gujarat Maritime University

Conference Reflection

Prof. Dr. S Shanthakumar, Provost, Gujarat Maritime University

Prof. Dr. Sanjeevi Shanthakumar, Provost of Gujarat Maritime University, opened the reflections by highlighting COLP's historic significance as the world's longest-running forum on ocean law and policy, hosted in India for the first time. He recounted the conference journey from an initial Pre-Conference BBNJ Clinic focused on capacity-building in Small Island



Developing States and Least Developed Countries, through comprehensive technical sessions addressing climate action, biodiversity, fisheries management, maritime security, AI in ocean governance, and dispute resolution. The conference underscored the visions and challenges facing Indian Ocean Rim States, including sustainable development, climate impacts, transnational threats, and evolving legal frameworks. He emphasized the importance of collective action, institutional readiness, and translating academic discourse into real-world policy for a sustainable maritime future. He concluded by expressing pride in the collaborative success of the event, the dedication of faculty and students, and the international partnerships that made the conference possible.

Valedictory Address

Shri. Pankaj Joshi (IAS), President, Gujarat Maritime University and Chief Secretary to the Government of Gujarat

Shri Pankaj Joshi, President of Gujarat Maritime University and Chief Secretary to the Government of Gujarat, conveyed his honour at the conference's success, marking a milestone for Gujarat Maritime University and India as the first time hosting COLP. He acknowledged the invaluable intellectual contributions from co-host institutions and the government support that made the event possible. Shri Joshi emphasized the conference theme's critical timing given the unique challenges faced by developing Indian Ocean states in climate resilience, food security, and maritime sovereignty. He stressed the need for equitable access to capacity-building, technology transfer, and collective action to confront illegal fishing, marine pollution, and other transnational threats. Shri Joshi highlighted the blue economy as a pathway for sustainable growth balanced with conservation imperatives and underscored the moral responsibility to protect the oceans as integral to human survival and prosperity. He concluded by urging participants to translate dialogue into meaningful policy and collaboration for a peaceful, secure, and sustainable Indian Ocean future.



Prof. Ronán Long, Director, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, WMU

Prof. Ronán Long, Director of the World Maritime University, praised the conference's success, highlighting the spirit of hospitality, the organization, and the exceptional talent of the students who enriched the event culturally and intellectually. He thanked key institutional partners, including the Naval War College and Ministry of Earth Sciences, and praised the technical rigor of forty speakers from twenty countries. Prof. Long affirmed that the spirit of international law remains strong despite global challenges and stressed the importance of



continued efforts to promote ratification and implementation of ocean governance agreements like the BBNJ. He reflected on the rich intellectual capital of the Indian Ocean region in the history of international law and expressed confidence in the conference's lasting impact on ocean governance.

Commander Christopher Hutton, JAGC, Stockton Centre for International Law

Commander Christopher Hutton, JAGC at the Stockton Centre for International Law, offered brief remarks expressing gratitude on behalf of the US Naval War College leadership. He commended the conference for its camaraderie, academic excellence, and the efforts of all participants, especially the committed students at Gujarat Maritime University. Commander



Hutton highlighted the collegiate spirit and the promising future of maritime law in India suggested by the students' enthusiasm and engagement. He closed with a traditional naval blessing wishing all fair winds and following seas as they return home, underscoring a spirit of continued connection and collaboration.

Day 4: Delhi Darshan

Day 4 of the COLP Programme was devoted to Delhi Darshan, offering the participants an opportunity to explore the historical, cultural, and architectural heritage of the national capital. The participants visited prominent landmarks such as India Gate, Red Fort, Lotus Temple, along with other historically significant sites in Delhi. The visit provided valuable insights into India's rich history, constitutional legacy, and cultural diversity. The tour was both educational and enriching, allowing participants to connect theoretical learning with the nation's historical and civic landmarks.



Keynote Speakers



CHIEF GUEST

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal
Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Ports,
Shipping and Waterways, India



Shri Pankaj Joshi
President, Gujarat Maritime University
Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat



Prof. (Dr.) S. Shanthakumar
Provost, Gujarat Maritime University
Director, Gujarat National Law University



Prof. Maximo Q. Mejia
President,
World Maritime University



Judge Neeru Chadha
Hon'ble Judge, International Tribunal
on Law of the Seas



Dr. M. Ravichandran
Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences



Amb. Hasanthi Dissanayake
Director General Ocean Affairs,
Environment and Climate Change,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka



Dato' Monaliza binti Suhaimi
Chairman, Director General,
Maritime Institute of Malaysia



Prof. James Kraska
Chair, Stockholm Centre
for International Law



Prof. Ronán Long
Director, WMU-Sasakawa
Global Ocean Institute



Prof. Dr. Manoj Kumar Sinha
President, Indian Society of
International Law



Dr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna
Director, Marine Policy Centre and
Senior Adviser to the President on
Ocean and Climate Policy,
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute



Charlie Garnjana-Goonchorn
Director, Legal Affairs Division,
Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand



Amb. Arif Havas Oegroseno
Vice-Minister, Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Indonesia

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(WMU-GOI)



Korea Maritime Institute
(KMI)



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University of Copenhagen



IMO International Maritime Law
Institute (IMLI)



UiT Norwegian Centre
for the Law of the sea

Norwegian Center for the Law
of the Sea (NCLoS)



National University of Singapore -
Centre for International Law (CIL)



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of Athens



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and Governance (CLIMA),
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