

Statement of the United States on Publicizing the Limits of the U.S. Extended Continental Shelf  
29<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Seabed Authority Assembly July 2024

In December 2023, the United States announced the limits of the U.S. continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, based on the rules in Article 76 of the Law of the Sea Convention. This was the culmination of a two-decade, multidisciplinary effort, underpinned by the largest offshore mapping effort ever conducted by the United States.

The delegation of the United States would like to make three points related to the U.S. continental shelf limits in areas beyond 200 nautical miles.

First, all coastal States – including the United States – have inherent rights to their continental shelf. This is part of longstanding customary international law and is reflected in Article 77 of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and Article 2 of the 1958 Continental Shelf Convention.

As international courts and tribunals have affirmed, continental shelf constitutes the natural prolongation of a coastal State's land territory into and under the sea, and a coastal State's rights with respect to its continental shelf exist *ipso facto* and *ab initio*.

Second, the United States has followed the rules in the Convention, specifically those in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Article 76, in determining its continental shelf limits in areas beyond 200 nautical miles. In addition to following these rules, the United States continental shelf limits respect existing continental shelf boundary treaties concluded with Cuba, Mexico, and the Russian Federation.

The International Court of Justice has repeatedly concluded that paragraph 1 of Article 76 is part of customary international law. This view is supported by abundant State practice and *opinio juris*. The United States, like other countries represented here today, is on record stating that the provisions in paragraphs 1 through 7 of Article 76 reflect customary international law and, therefore, are binding on all States.

Third, the United States has prepared a full submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental shelf, consistent with Article 76 and the Commission's Guidelines, and has stated that we will file this submission with the Commission when the United States joins the Convention.

Furthermore, we are open to filing a submission with the Commission as a non-Party to the Convention.

The United States would welcome review of our continental shelf limits by the Commission. In our view, this would be consistent with the Commission's mandate under the Convention to provide recommendations and advice to coastal States as opposed to States Parties.

That said, we understand that the question of whether the Commission should review a submission made by a non-party is not a matter on which all States Parties agree. This diversity of opinion on this subject has informed our approach.

In closing, let me state that the United States is open and transparent about our continental shelf work, including making supporting data and information about our continental shelf limits available on official U.S. government websites. We stand ready to provide additional information to any interested governments.