



NCLOS Annual Conference 2026

Swinging Tides

Transformations and Resilience in the Law of the Sea

3-5 November 2026

Tromsø, Norway

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea (NCLOS) is pleased to announce the call for papers for its annual conference, which will be organized in Tromsø, Norway, November 3-5, 2026.

The law of the sea, both a historical foundation and a contemporary major pillar of the international legal order, finds itself caught between accelerating and swinging tides. These tides do not simply rise or fall; they press, they nourish, and eventually, they reshape. They test the resilience of old structures and whisper the promise of new ones.

Geopolitical rivalry is not new, but its current intensity has reached a point where the very substance of international law appears uncertain. The disruptive force of strategic competition risks eroding the shoreline of the legal order, including the law of the sea. Or perhaps what we are witnessing is not erosion, but reshaping—an adjustment of contours along with some of the fundamental concepts that have defined the discipline for decades.

An increasingly plural world may give rise to an increasingly plural world order. Shifting balances of power—regionally and globally—may trigger incremental re-ordering(s) on multiple scales. Whether

this reflects systemic transformations or merely cyclical recalibration(s) characteristic of international law remains an open question.

At the same time, the slow and relentless tide of climate change presses forward, stressing not only vulnerable coasts but also the legal architecture built in an era that never contemplated such conditions. Sea level rise and shifting baselines have already become familiar landmarks in legal debates. Yet new swells form at the horizon: waves of novel technologies, emerging activities, and climate-driven interventions that challenge the capacity of existing rules to hold their shape beneath the weight of a global environmental crisis.

Finally, what was once described as the fragmentation of international law—an expression of its horizontal, decentralized nature—has in some respects begun to give way to trends of systemic integration and institutional strengthening. Dissatisfied with the inertia of traditional diplomatic and legal pathways, smaller and more vulnerable actors have coalesced to push for transformative change. The combined pressure generated by the advisory opinions of ITLOS and the ICJ, alongside the momentum of the BBNJ process, carries significant transformative potential. At minimum, these developments reinforce—at least on paper—the effectiveness and coherence of the international law of the sea.

Paradoxically, international law has never appeared simultaneously so fragile and so powerful. The law of the sea, positioned at the very heart of these shifting waters, becomes a natural vantage point from which to take the pulse of the global legal order. Through its swinging tides, we glimpse both the vulnerabilities of the present and the possibilities of the age to come.

Abstracts may link to any of the allusions above, but we offer an open, non-exhaustive, list of broad, suggestive, themes that you may address,

- Geopolitical crises and the law of the sea
- The Climate-Ocean Nexus and the law of the sea
- Regions and regionalization(s)
- Systemic Integration of the law of the sea in a time of uncertainty
- The resilience of law of the sea
- Architectural strains
- Technological acceleration(s)
- Freedoms (of the seas) and spheres (of influence)
- Producing and silencing knowledge(s)
- New actors and agencies

This conference will provide an opportunity for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue and to contribute to the ongoing debate on ocean commons governance. In addition, leading experts are invited to give keynote lectures.

Venue

UiT, the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway

Dates

November 3-5, 2026

Organizers

[The Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea](#) (NCLOS), UiT, The Arctic University of Norway

Abstract Submissions

Abstracts should be submitted by 15 June 2026. Proposals will be considered by the conference convenors on the basis of academic merits and fit with the conference theme.

Abstracts should be no more than 350 words and include the following information: author(s) first and last name, institutional affiliation(s) and the title of the paper. Please e-mail all abstracts to vito.delucia@uit.no. We anticipate that authors will be advised by 1 August 2026 if their abstract has been accepted.

Publication of Papers

The conference hopes to generate new knowledge and ideas on these crucial issues, which will be disseminated through an academic publication (or more than one), whether a special issue of peer-reviewed articles, an edited volume or alternative forms of dissemination, to be determined once the range of contributions is finalized and assessed.¹

Inquiries

Inquiries with respect to abstracts should be directed to Vito De Lucia at vito.delucia@uit.no.

Inquiries with respect to administrative matters should be directed to Christin Skjervold at christin.skjervold@uit.no.

¹ Each paper that may be submitted to one such publication will have to undergo the regular peer review process and any invitation to contribute gives no guarantee of publication