

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS – Maintaining a Rules-Based Maritime Order**  
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A pleasant morning to everyone. I wish to thank everyone the ADR Institute for inviting me to do this address.

The oceans and seas cover 71% of our planet. Our continents, archipelagos and islands are connected by nautical highways that traverse our oceans and seas. Along these nautical highways pass 90% of traded goods in the world. The survival and progress of nations depend on the free and unimpeded passage along these nautical highways. The ocean and seas are also rich source of food and hundreds of millions of people will starve or will be malnourished without food from the oceans and seas. The ocean senses are also rich in oil and gas and other emerging energy sources, like methane hydrates.

There are also other minerals that are abundant in the seabed of the oceans and seas. Obviously, a body of rules is required for the use of our oceans and seas, as well as, for the exploitation and conservation of the resources in our oceans and seas.

Such body of rules must be complied with by all nations of the world, otherwise without such body of rules or without compliance with such rules, nations will go to war defend their right to use the oceans and seas and to exploit the resources of the oceans and seas.

Fortunately, there is such a body of rules called the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS. UNCLOS is one of the greatest achievements of men in developing international law. UNCLOS has qualified customary international law that developed through the ages. And has introduced novel concepts such as the Exclusive Economic Zone and the International Seabed Authority, which regulates the resources in the seabed beyond national jurisdictions.

The compulsory dispute mechanism of UNCLOS is one of the greatest advances in international law when UNCLOS was signed in 1982. Under UNCLOS, 'right is might'.

Unfortunately, in the South China Sea, the People's Republic of China has sought to overturn this 'right is might' concept upside down by claiming almost entire South China Sea in glaring violation of UNCLOS.

China is enforcing its claim outside the compulsory dispute settlement mechanism of UNCLOS, by authorizing its Coast Guard to fire on foreign vessels fishing in the high seas or in their own Exclusive Economic Zones, hundreds of nautical miles from China's own Exclusive Economic Zone. China has adopted the concept of 'might is right' in the South China Sea, in violation not only of UNCLOS, but also the UN charter.

The nations of the world must unite to strongly push back China, otherwise if China succeeds in taking the South China Sea, or in making the South China Sea its own national lake, denying the application of UNCLOS in the South China Sea, then UNCLOS will collapse for other naval powers will also seize their new seas as their own possessions. That will mean that the demise of UNCLOS and the end of a rules-based maritime order, that will mean the beginning of a maritime order created and enforced by naval guns and the entrenchment of the 'might is right' concept.

That will mean a naval arms race among coastal states and the diversion of funds from social service to naval defense. That will mean perpetual tension and even chaos in the oceans and seas of the world.

In this webinar, we will examine how we can maintain UNCLOS, the rules-based maritime order the world in the South China Sea. The South China Sea is the battleground, whether UNCLOS survive or fall in the seaside. I hope that the discussions this morning will make everyone realize how great the stakes are in this battle to maintain the existing rules-based maritime order in our world.

Thank you and a good day to everyone!