### 2. CONVENTION ON THE HIGH SEAS

**Geneva, 29 April 1958**

**ENTRY INTO FORCE:** 30 September 1962, in accordance with article 34.

**REGISTRATION:** 3 January 1963, No. 6465.

**STATUS:** Signatories: 46. Parties: 63.


*Note:* See "Note:" in same place in chapter XXI.1.

#### Table of Participants

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### Declarations and Reservations

(Unless otherwise indicated, the declarations and reservations were made upon ratification, accession or succession.)

#### ALBANIA

**Article 9:** The Government of the People's Republic of Albania considers that, in virtue of well-known principles of international law, all Government ships owned or operated by a State, without exception, irrespective of the purpose for which they are used, are subject to the jurisdiction only of the State under whose flag they sail.

The Government of the People's Republic of Albania declares that the definition of piracy as given in the Convention is not consistent with present international law and does not serve to ensure freedom of navigation on the high seas.

#### BELARUS

**Article 9:** The Government of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic considers that the principle of international law according to which a ship on the high seas is not subject to any jurisdiction except that of the flag State applies without restriction to all government ships.

The Government of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic considers that the definition of piracy given in the Convention does not cover certain acts which under contemporary international law should be considered as acts of piracy and does not serve to ensure freedom of navigation on international sea routes.

#### BULGARIA

**Article 9:** The Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria considers that the principle of international law according to which a ship on the high seas is not subject to any jurisdiction except that of the flag State applies without restriction to all government ships.

The Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria considers that the definition of piracy given in the Convention does not cover certain acts which under contemporary international law should be considered as acts of piracy and does not serve to ensure freedom of navigation on international sea routes.

### Ratification, Accession(a), Succession(d)

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#### Declarations and Reservations

The Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria considers that the definition of piracy given in the Convention does not cover certain acts which under contemporary international law should be considered as acts of piracy and does not serve to ensure freedom of navigation on international sea routes.

#### CZECH REPUBLIC3

#### HUNGARY

**Article 9:** The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic is of the opinion that, according to the general rules of international law, ships owned or operated by a State and used on government service whether commercial or non-commercial, enjoy on the high seas the same immunity as warships.

The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic declares that the definition of piracy as given in the Convention is not consistent with present international law and does not serve the general interests of the freedom of navigation on the high seas.

#### INDONESIA

The terms 'territorial sea' and 'internal waters' mentioned in the Convention, as far as the Republic of Indonesia is concerned, are interpreted in accordance with Article 1 of the Government Regulation in Lieu of an Act No. 4 of the Year 1960 (State Gazette 1960, No. 22) concerning Indonesian Waters, which, in accordance with Article 1 of the Act No. 1 of the Year 1961 (State Gazette 1961, No. 3) concerning the Enactment of All Emergency Acts and All Government Regulations in Lieu of an Act which were promulgated before January 1, 1961, has become Act, which Article word by word is as follows:

**Article 1:**

1. The Indonesian Waters consist of the territorial sea and the internal waters of Indonesia.
2. The Indonesian territorial sea is a maritime belt of a width of twelve nautical miles, the outer limit of which is measured perpendicular to the baselines or points on the baselines which consist of straight lines connecting the outermost point on the low water mark of the outermost
islands or part of such islands comprising Indonesian territory with the provision that in case of straits of a width of not more than twenty-four nautical miles and Indonesia is not the only coastal state the outer limit of the Indonesian territorial sea shall be drawn at the middle of the strait.

3. The Indonesian internal waters are all waters lying within the baselines mentioned in paragraph 2.

4. One nautical mile is sixty to one degree of latitude.

IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)

Article 2: With respect to the words "no State may validly purport to subject any part of them to its sovereignty", it shall be understood that this prohibition does not apply to the continental shelf, which is governed by article 2 of the Convention on the Continental Shelf.

Articles 2, 3 and 4: The Iranian Government maintains the objection on the ground of excess of competence, expressed by its delegation at the twelfth plenary meeting of the Conference on the Law of the Sea on 24 April 1958, to the articles recommended by the Fifth Committee of the Conference and incorporated in the afore-mentioned articles of the Convention on the High Seas. The Iranian Government accordingly reserves all rights regarding the contents of these articles in so far as they relate to countries having no sea coast.

Article 2(3)–article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2: Application of the provisions of these articles relating to the laying of submarine cables and pipelines shall be subject to the authorization of the coastal State, in so far as the continental shelf is concerned.

MEXICO

Article 9: The Government of Mexico enters an express reservation with regard to article 9, since it considers that government ships, irrespective of the use to which they are put, enjoy immunity; it therefore does not accept the limitation imposed in the article in question, which provides that only ships owned or operated by a State and used only on government non-commercial service shall have immunity from the jurisdiction of other States on the high seas.

MONGOLIA

a) . . .

b) Subject to the following additional declaration in respect of article 15:

The Government of the Mongolian People's Republic considers that the definition of piracy given in article 15 of the Convention does not cover acts which under contemporary international law should be regarded as acts of piracy and thus does not adequately reflect the requirements that must be fulfilled in order to fully ensure freedom of navigation on international waterways.

POLAND

Article 9: "The Government of the Polish People's Republic considers that the rule expressed in article 9 applies to all ships owned or operated by a State."

"The Government of the Polish People's Republic considers that the definition of piracy as contained in the Convention does not fully correspond with the present state of international law in this respect."

ROMANIA

Article 9: The Government of the Romanian People's Republic considers that the principle of international law according to which a ship on the high seas is not subject to any jurisdiction except that of the flag State applies to all government ships regardless of the purpose for which they are used.

The Government of the Romanian People's Republic considers that the definition of piracy as given in article 15 of the Convention on the High Seas does not cover certain acts which under contemporary international law should be considered as acts of piracy.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Article 9: The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics considers that the principle of international law according to which a ship on the high seas is not subject to any jurisdiction except that of the flag State applies without restriction to all government ships.

The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics considers that the definition of piracy given in the Convention does not cover certain acts which under contemporary international law should be considered as acts of piracy and does not serve to ensure freedom of navigation on international sea routes.

SLOVAKIA

SPAIN

Spain's accession is not to be interpreted as recognition of any rights or situations in connexion with the waters of Gibraltar other than those referred to in article 10 of the Treaty of Utrecht, of 13 July 1713, between the Crowns of Spain and Great Britain.

UKRAINE

Article 9: The Government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic considers that the principle of international law according to which a ship on the high seas is not subject to any jurisdiction except that of the flag State applies without restriction to all government ships.

The Government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic considers that the definition of piracy given in the Convention does not cover certain acts which under contemporary international law should be considered as acts of piracy and does not serve to ensure freedom of navigation on international sea routes.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

"In depositing their instrument of ratification Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and North ern Ireland declare that, save as may be stated in any further and separate notices that may hereafter be given, ratification of this Convention on behalf of the United Kingdom does not extend to the States in the Persian Gulf enjoying British protection. Multilateral conventions to which the United Kingdom becomes a party are not extended to these States until such time as an extension is requested by the Ruler of the State concerned."
Objections
(Unless otherwise indicated, the objections were received upon ratification, accession or succession.)

AUSTRALIA
"Objections to the reservations hereunder:
(a) The reservation made to articles 2, 3 and 4 by Iran on signature.
(b) The reservation made to paragraph 3 of article 2 and to paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 26 by Iran on signature.
(c) The reservation made to article 9 by Bulgaria on signature and on ratification.
(d) The reservations made to article 9 by the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on signature and confirmed on ratification.
(e) The reservation made by Indonesia on ratification.
In relation to the reservation made by Indonesia [...] the Australian Government has previously informed the Indonesian Government that it does not recognize the validity in international law of the Regulation referred to in the reservation and that it does not consider itself bound by it."

"Objection of the Government of Australia to the reservation contained in the instrument of accession by Albania to the Convention on the High Seas done at Geneva on 29 April 1958."
"The Government of Australia places on record the formal objection to the reservation made by the Government of Mexico."
"Objection of the Australian Government to the reservation by the German Democratic Republic concerning article 9 of the Convention on the High Seas, 1958, and contained in the instrument of accession of the German Democratic Republic to that Convention."

DENMARK
"The Government of Denmark declares that it does not find acceptable:
"The reservations made by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to article 9;"
"The reservation made by the Government of Iran to article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2;
"The reservation made by the Government of Indonesia regarding the interpretation of the terms territorial sea and internal waters;"
"The above-mentioned objections shall not affect the coming into force of the Convention, according to article 34, as between Denmark and the Contracting Parties concerned."
"The Government of Denmark does not find acceptable the reservation made by the German Democratic Republic on December 27, 1973 to article 20 of the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone.
"The Government of Denmark also finds unacceptable the reservation made by the German Democratic Republic on the same date to article 9 of the Convention on the High Seas.
"The above-mentioned objections shall not affect the coming into force of the Conventions as between Denmark and the German Democratic Republic."

FIJI
"The Government of Fiji declares that it withdraws the observations made by the United Kingdom with respect to the reservation made on ratification of the Convention by the Government of Indonesia and substitutes therefore the following observation:
"With respect to the reservation made by the Government of Indonesia on ratification of the above-mentioned Convention on the High Seas, the Government of Fiji states that it considers that the extent of Indonesian national waters referred to therein is subject to the rule of international law that, where the establishment of a straight baseline has the effect of enclosing as internal waters areas which previously had been considered as part of the high seas, a right of innocent passage shall exist in those waters, subject to the regulations of the national authorities respecting police, customs, quarantine and control of pollution, and without prejudice to the exclusive right of such authorities in respect of the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of such waters and of the subjacent seabed and subsoil.
"Furthermore, the Government of Fiji maintains all other objections communicated to the Secretary-General by the United Kingdom Government to the reservations or declarations made by certain States with respect to this Convention, reserving only its position on that Government's objections bearing on the application of the Optional Protocol of Signature pending final disposition of the question of the succession by the Government of Fiji to the said Protocol."

GERMANY
"The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany considers the following reservations to be inconsistent with the aims and purposes of the Convention of 29 April 1958 on the High Seas and therefore to be unacceptable:
"1. The reservation made to the Convention by the Government of Indonesia;
"2. The reservation declared at signature of the Convention by the Government of Iran to articles 2, 3 and 4 and to article 2, item 3, in conjunction with article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Convention, the latter in so far as that reservation is to open up the possibility of refusing permission to lay submarine cables and pipelines even where certain conditions have been fulfilled;
"3. The reservations and the declarations to be qualified in substance as reservations made to article 9 of the Convention by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia and Hungary;
"4. The declarations made by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to the definition of piracy as given in the Convention in so far as the said declarations are to be qualified as reservations.
"The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany furthermore considers the reservation made on 27 December 1973 by the German Democratic Republic to article 9 of the Convention to be inconsistent with the aims and purposes of the Convention and therefore to be unacceptable."

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"This also applies to the declaration made by the Government of the German Democratic Republic on the same date to the definition of piracy as given in the Convention in so far as that declaration is to be qualified as a reservation. “The present declaration does not affect the applicability, in all other respects, of the Convention under international law as between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Parties to the Convention having made the reservations and declarations referred to above."

"The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany considers the reservation made by the Government of the Mongolian People’s Republic to article 9 of the Convention of 29 April 1958 on the High Seas as well as the declaration made by the Government of the Mongolian People’s Republic to article 15 of that Convention, in so far as the latter is in substance to be qualified as a reservation, to be inconsistent with the aims and purposes of the Convention and therefore unacceptable. "The present declaration does not affect the applicability, in all other respects, of the Convention under international law as between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Mongolian People’s Republic."

ISRAEL

"Objection to all reservations and declarations made in connection with the signing or ratification of or accession to the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone and the Convention on the High Seas which are incompatible with the purposes and objects of these Conventions. This objection applies in particular to the declaration or reservation made by Tunisia to article 16, paragraph 4, of the first of the above-mentioned Conventions on the occasion of signature."

JAPAN

"1. The Government of Japan wishes to state that it does not consider acceptable any unilateral statement in whatever form, made by a State upon signing, ratifying or acceding to the Convention on the High Seas, which is intended to exclude or modify for such State legal effects of the provisions of the Convention.

"2. In particular, the Government of Japan finds unacceptable the following reservations:

"(a) The reservations made by the Governments of Bulgaria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to article 9.

"(b) The reservations made by the Government of Iran to article 2 and article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2.

"The reservations made by the Government of Indonesia.

"The reservation made by the Government of Albania to article 9 in its instrument of accession.

"The reservation made by the Government of Mexico to article 9 in its instrument of accession."

MADAGASCAR

The Malagasy Republic formally expresses its objection to all reservations and statements made in connexion with signature or ratification of the Convention on the High Seas or in connexion with accession to the said Convention which are inconsistent with the aims and purposes of this Convention. This objection applies in particular to the statements or reservations made with regard to the Convention on the High Seas by Bulgaria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Indonesia, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

NETHERLANDS

"The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands declare that they do not find acceptable "the reservations to article 9 made by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

"the declarations made by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the definition of piracy given in the Convention, as far as these declarations amount to a reservation;

"the reservations made by the Iranian Government to articles 2, 3 and 4, and
to articles 2, paragraph 3, and 26, paragraphs 1 and 2;
the declaration made by the Government of Iran on article 2 as far as it amounts to a reservation to the said article;
the reservation made by the Government of Indonesia."

"The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands do not find acceptable the reservation made by the Government of Mexico."

PORTUGAL

"The Government of Portugal cannot accept the reservation proposed by the Mexican Government requiring the exemption of government ships from the dispositions laid down in the Convention, irrespective of the use to which these ships are put."

THAILAND

Objection to the following reservations and declarations:

"Reservations to article 9 made by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, the Byelorussian SSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR;

"Declarations to article 15 made by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, the Byelorussian SSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR;

"Reservation made by the Government of Indonesia."

TONGA

"The Government of the Kingdom of Tonga with respect to the reservation made on ratification of the Convention by the Government of Indonesia and substitute therefore the following observation:

"With respect to the reservation made by the Government of Indonesia on ratification of the above-mentioned Convention on the High Seas, the Government of Tonga states that it considers that the extent of Indonesian national waters referred to therein is subject to the rule of international law that, where the establishment of a straight baseline has the effect of enclosing as internal waters areas which previously had been considered as part of the high seas, a right of innocent passage shall exist in those waters, subject to the regulations of the national authorities respecting police, customs, quarantine and control of pollution, and without prejudice to the exclusive right of such authorities in respect of the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of such waters and of the subjacent seabed and subsoil."

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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

"Her Majesty's Government desire to place on record their formal objection to the following reservations and declarations:

"The reservations to article 9, made by the Governments of Bulgaria, the Byelorussian SSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian SSR, and the USSR.

"The reservations to articles 2, 3 and 4, and article 2(3) made by the Iranian Government." 

"Objection to the reservation made on ratification by the Government of Indonesia.

Her Majesty's Government have already stated to the Indonesian Government that they cannot regard as valid under international law the provisions of "Government Regulation No. 4, 1960, in lieu of an Act concerning Indonesian Waters' to the extent that these provisions embody a claim to territorial waters extending to 12 miles or purport to demarcate territorial waters by the drawing of straight base lines between the outermost islands, or points, of a group of islands or purport to treat as internal waters all waters enclosed by those lines."

"Objection to the reservation to article 9 contained in the Albanian instrument of accession to the Convention." 

"Objection to the reservation to article 9 contained in the Mexican instrument of accession.

"Her Majesty's Government desire to place on record their formal objection to the reservations by the German Democratic Republic concerning article 9 of the Convention on the High Seas." (In this connection, the Government of the United Kingdom indicated that they had not received the depositary notification reproducing the text of the reservations made by the Government of the German Democratic Republic until early in August 1974. )

"The views of the United Kingdom Government regarding reservations and declarations made in connection with this Convention were set out in the letter of the 5th of November 1959 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The United Kingdom Government now desire to place on record their formal objection to the reservation by the Government of Mongolia concerning article 9 of this Convention."

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

"The United States does not find the following reservations acceptable:

"1. The reservations to article 9 made by the Governments of Bulgaria, the Byelorussian SSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian SSR and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

"2. The reservations made by the Iranian Government to articles 2, 3, and 4 and article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2.

"3. The reservation made by the Government of Indonesia.

"The reservation to article 9 made by the Government of Albania in its instrument of accession.

"The reservation made by the Government of Mexico in its instrument of accession.

"The Government of the United States does not find acceptable the reservations made by the German Democratic Republic to article 20 of the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone and to article 9 of the Convention on the High Seas. The Government of the United States, however, considers those Conventions as continuing in force between it and the German Democratic Republic except that provisions to which the above-mentioned reservations are addressed shall apply only to the extent that they are not affected by those reservations."

Notes:

1 Signed on behalf of the Republic of China, on 29 April 1958. See note concerning signatures, ratifications, accessions, etc., on behalf of China (note 1 under “China” in the “Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume).

2 The former Yugoslavia had signed and ratified the Convention on 29 April 1958 and 28 January 1966, respectively. See also note 1 under “Bosnia and Herzegovina”, “Croatia”, “former Yugoslavia”, “Slovenia”, “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and ”Yugoslavia” in the “Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume.

3 Czechoslovakia had signed and ratified on 30 October 1958 and 31 August 1961, respectively, with reservations. For the text of the reservations, see United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 450, p. 142. See also note 1 under “Czech Republic” and note 1 under “Slovakia” in the “Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume.

4 See note 1 under “Germany” regarding Berlin (West) in the “Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume.

5 The German Democratic Republic had acceded to the Convention on 27 December 1973 with a reservation and declarations. For the text of the reservation and declarations, see United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 905, p. 80. See also note 2 under “Germany” in the “Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume.

6 See note 1 under ”Montenegro” in the ”Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume.

7 In respect of the Kingdom in Europe, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles. See also note 1 under “Netherlands Antilles” and “Suriname” in the “Historical Information” section in the front matter of this volume.

8 In a communication received on 19 July 1990, the Government of Mongolia notified the Secretary-General of its decision to withdraw the reservation made upon accession concerning article 9. For the text of the reservation, see United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1025, p. 370.

9 On 27 October 1967, the Government of the United States of America transmitted to the Secretary-General the following communication with reference to its previous communications regarding ratifications and accessions to the Law of the Sea Conventions with reservations which were unacceptable to the United States of America:

"The Government of the United States of America has received an inquiry regarding the applicability of several of the Geneva Law of the Sea Conventions of 1958 between the United
States and States which ratified or acceded to those Conventions with reservations which the United States found to be unacceptable. The Government of the United States wishes to state that it has considered and will continue to consider all the Geneva Law of the Sea Conventions of 1958 as being in force between it and all other States that have ratified or acceded thereto, including States that have ratified or acceded with reservations unacceptable to the United States. With respect to States which ratified or acceded with reservations unacceptable to the United States, the Conventions are considered by the United States to be in force between it and each of those States except that provisions to which such reservations are addressed shall apply only to the extent that they are not affected by those reservations. The United States considers that such application of the Convention does not in any manner constitute any concurrence by the United States in the substance of any of the reservations involved."