

UNCLOS

Official reference	United Nations Convention on the law of the sea	
Official website	www.un.org/depts/los	
Relevant dates	Document	10/12/1982
	Entry into force	16/11/1994
	Ratification by Belgium	18/06/1998
	Ratification by Flanders	14/07/1998
Policy level	International	
Type of instrument	Convention	
Geographical reach	World seas	
International contact point	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS)	
Federal ratification	Wet van 18 juni 1998 houdende instemming met het Verdrag van de Verenigde Naties inzake het recht van de Zee, gedaan te Montego Bay op 10 december 1982 en de Overeenkomst inzake de tenuitvoerlegging van deel XI van het Verdrag van de Verenigde Naties inzake het recht van de Zee van 10 december 1982, gedaan te New York op 28 juli 1994	
Flemish ratification	Decreet van 14 juli 1998 houdende instemming met het Verdrag van de Verenigde Naties inzake het Recht van de Zee, en de bijlagen, ondertekend in Montego Bay op 10 december 1982, en de Overeenkomst inzake de toepassing van deel XI van het Verdrag van de Verenigde Naties inzake het Recht van de Zee van 10 december 1982, en de bijlage, ondertekend in New York op 28 juli 1994	

// abstract:

The UNCLOS Convention is a comprehensive legal framework that stipulates rules on the use of the oceans and their natural resources, pollution prevention, marine scientific research, economic and commercial activities and the settlement of disputes. It is therefore fair to say that the UNCLOS Convention is the 'constitution' of the ocean. Due to its comprehensive nature, the regulations of the UNCLOS Convention are often quite general, allowing their further development by other international conventions such as the *MARPOL Convention* (p.38) or the *OSPAR Convention* (p.41).

UNCLOS consists of 17 parts and 9 annexes. In the first place, the convention regulates the division of the seas and oceans in several legal zones, in which the Coastal States have some authority. These zones include internal waters, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the continental shelf and international waters. In the territorial sea (12 nautical miles from the baseline) the Coastal State is free to enact laws and is responsible for jurisdiction. In this zone, the right of innocent passage applies to all ships. In the contiguous zone, the Coastal State exercises control to prevent infringements of customs, taxes, immigration or health regulations within its territory and its territorial sea, and can sanction such infringements. The UNCLOS Convention also grants certain rights to the Coastal State concerning archaeological and historical objects in the zone. The EEZ and the continental shelf overlap in terms of content and geographical scope (200 nautical miles from the baseline). The continental shelf includes the sea bottom and the subsoil, whereas the EEZ also encompasses the overlying water column. In these zones, the Coastal States have sovereign rights and jurisdiction with respect to the economic use of living and non-living resources (e.g. energy generation or extraction of raw materials). The rights of the Coastal States in the EEZ and in the continental shelf are limited by the granting of rights to other States situated in these zones.