

IHLI Statement on Naval Mines and Maritime Security

UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

17 October 2025

Chair, Distinguished delegates,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLI). IHLI is a grassroots, youth-led initiative bringing together young professionals and international law practitioners from sixteen countries across the Global South. Most of our members come from communities directly affected by armed conflicts, which shapes our understanding of humanitarian challenges on the ground. Our mission focuses on documentation, advocacy, and legal awareness, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, where the application of international humanitarian law remains most critical. Through community-based engagement, women's empowerment, and field-driven collaboration, IHLI has established itself as a credible and dynamic platform for advancing disarmament, humanitarian norms, and inclusive peacebuilding globally.

Madam /Mr Chair,

We align ourselves with the statements delivered today by civil society addressing the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of international legal instruments particularly those related to international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians, and sustainable peace. Among these pressing challenges is the use of naval mines and improvised maritime explosive devices, which in recent years has re-emerged as a serious threat to international peace and security, maritime safety, and the environment.

Although naval mines are not new weapons, their deployment today in congested sea lanes and strategic waterways creates unprecedented risks for civilian shipping, global trade, and marine ecosystems. [According to the latest GICHD \(Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining\) report on Underwater Explosive Ordnance](#), Yemen has recorded the highest number of incidents in the past decade around 78 cases related to naval mines, with 142 mines washed ashore since 2017. Most of these mines, locally manufactured types such as Midi and Thwaq, were designed to disrupt ports and vital maritime routes, causing severe environmental contamination and restricting fishing and trade in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

In Ukraine, several drifting naval mines were detected this year near the coast of Odesa, while the Ukrainian Navy, with international partners, continues large-scale clearance operations to ensure safe navigation. Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean Sea and Gulf of Oman, 2025 witnessed explosions affecting oil tankers, reportedly caused by limpet mines, highlighting the evolving and persistent nature of this threat even outside active conflict zones. For example, [in July 2025, the Vilamoura oil tanker, flying the Marshall Islands flag, suffered an explosion off the Libyan coast, with security sources indicating that a limpet mine was the likely cause.](#)

The humanitarian and environmental consequences of these practices are grave. They kill civilians, destroy critical infrastructure, pollute marine ecosystems, and undermine prospects for economic recovery and maritime development. Unlike landmines, which are addressed under the 1997 Ottawa Convention, naval mines remain outside any comprehensive and modern international regulatory framework.

Madam/Mr Chair,

From a legal standpoint, the use of naval mines is regulated primarily by the 1907 Hague Convention (VIII) on the laying of automatic submarine contact mines, alongside customary international humanitarian law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. These instruments oblige states to ensure control, notification, and removal of mines after hostilities. However, existing frameworks remain insufficient to address new technologies and evolving risks, such as autonomous systems and smart mines.

Therefore, the IHLI emphasizes the urgent need for coordinated international action, and we call upon Member States to:

- Renew their commitment to international humanitarian and maritime law, and encourage the First Committee to integrate the humanitarian and environmental dimensions of naval mines into its deliberations on disarmament, peace, and security—particularly in view of emerging risks in the Red Sea;
- Support the development of clearer international standards governing the responsible use of naval mines, including mandatory notification, and promote the participation of youth-led and civil society initiatives in informal consultations related to potential legal frameworks;

- Enhance cooperation with youth initiatives by involving them in thematic discussions and encouraging them to submit research and innovative solutions that can assist States in addressing this issue;

- Promote transparency and accountability among all actors state and non-state— regarding the use of explosive and naval weapons in maritime environments.

Protecting our seas from naval mines is not merely a matter of disarmament; it is a matter of maritime security, human safety, and moral responsibility to safeguard lives, trade, and the shared environment upon which the future of humanity depends.

Thank you, Madam /Mr Chair.