

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 20 April 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the pleasure to inform you that the Kingdom of Bahrain, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of April 2026, will hold a high-level open debate on the theme “The safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain”, in connection with the item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security”. The open debate will take place on Monday, 27 April 2026, at 11 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, the Kingdom of Bahrain has prepared a concept note, contained in the annex to this letter.

I would be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jamal Fares **Alrowaiei**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 20 April 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council high-level open debate on the theme “The safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain”, to be held on 27 April 2026

As President of the Security Council for April 2026, the Kingdom of Bahrain intends to convene a high-level open debate on 27 April 2026 on the theme “The safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain” in connection with the item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security”.

The meeting will provide a platform for Member States to engage on how the Security Council can more effectively address the evolving maritime security landscape and enhance a collective response to ensuring the safety and protection of international waterways.

I. Background and the role of the Security Council

The Security Council, acting in accordance with its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, has remained actively engaged on maritime security issues, especially over recent decades.

With the rise of threats to the safety of international waterways, including threats to the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms of vessels, the increase in attacks against merchant and commercial vessels, and the rising risk to seafarers, such discussions are more relevant, especially in addressing maritime security issues around critical maritime routes.

The Kingdom of Bahrain’s signature event on maritime security seeks to focus the scope of discussions on this topic in the Security Council by not only addressing traditional concerns such as piracy, trafficking and other illicit activities, as well as region-specific risks, but also highlighting the importance of the safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain to international peace and security and their vital role in the stability of the world economy.

At a time when the world is grappling with an energy and trade crisis driven by escalating threats to maritime navigation, recent developments have brought renewed attention to maritime chokepoints. These critical maritime routes serve as a major transit route for global energy flows and the movement of goods. Today, many such waterways carry not only significant volumes of oil and gas, but also bulk commodities, agricultural shipments, raw materials and manufactured goods, making them critical enablers of global supply chains.

Any disruption, closure or obstruction of or other interference with maritime transport through critical waterways poses a serious and direct threat to international peace and security and adversely affects international trade, energy security, economic stability and access to vital humanitarian assistance.

Addressing these challenges requires a unified and collective approach grounded in international cooperation and the rule of law to effectively counter the increasingly far-reaching implications of the threats facing the maritime domain.

International law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, establishes the legal framework for conventional maritime governance applicable to activities in the oceans and seas, including the protection and regulation of maritime passage through straits used for international navigation.

In the statement by its President on 9 August 2021 (S/PRST/2021/15), the Security Council noted with concern the ongoing threats to maritime safety and security and the use of sea to conduct crimes and acts against shipping, offshore installations, critical infrastructure and other maritime interests, and noted the deplorable loss of life and adverse impact on international trade, energy security and the global economy resulting from such activities.

Previous Security Council resolutions have addressed issues of maritime security, including safeguarding maritime transit routes. Recently, resolutions [2722 \(2024\)](#) and [2817 \(2026\)](#) affirm that the navigational rights and freedoms of merchant and commercial vessels, in accordance with international law, must be respected.

Maritime security is essential to the economic security and prosperity of all Member States. The Security Council plays a vital role in the protection of the freedom of navigation, which in turn allows for the free flow of trade, food, energy and connectivity. The protection of navigation through various waterways in the maritime domain should be understood not only as a specific regional security priority, but also as a global collective responsibility.

Within this quickly evolving landscape, it is important to build on existing national, regional and international initiatives to enhance maritime safety and security, strengthen Member States' capacity and take effective measures against maritime threats.

II. Objectives of the discussion

The open debate will provide an opportunity for Member States to exchange views on:

- Better understanding the current and evolving threats to the maritime security landscape, particularly those affecting lawful transit passage or freedom of navigation.
- Strengthening international cooperation to enhance the safety and protection of critical waterways.
- Examining recent developments in the maritime domain that may require advancing discussions on such issues by the Security Council.

III. Guiding questions for Member States

To facilitate a focused discussion, Member States are encouraged to reflect on the following questions:

- How do threats to critical waterways in the maritime domain affect international peace and security and the stability of global trade routes?
- What practical measures can Member States and relevant international organizations take to mitigate the impact of these evolving threats on international navigation, global trade and supply chain stability?
- How can existing frameworks and mechanisms be implemented, strengthened and better coordinated to strengthen maritime stability and security?

- How can the Security Council reinforce global efforts on maritime security and pursue a more integrated and forward-looking approach?
- How can the Security Council support the development of sustainable solutions to protect vital waterways in the maritime domain in a manner that contributes to long-term peace and security?

IV. Meeting format and briefers

The high-level open debate will be held in connection with the item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security”. Member States are encouraged to participate at the highest level possible.

The format will allow for briefings by invited experts and statements by Security Council members and other participating delegations. Member States are encouraged to deliver concise interventions, highlighting what efforts may be undertaken to ensure the safety and protection of international waterways in the maritime domain, reflecting on ways to strengthen international cooperation to mitigate these threats, and sharing their views on how the Council and the broader United Nations system can respond. To guarantee the participation of as many Member States as possible, statements should not exceed three minutes, and group statements are encouraged.

Inscription on the list of speakers will open at 9.30 a.m. on 22 April 2026 through the eSpeakers module on e-deleGATE.

Briefers will include:

- António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization
- Nick Childs, Senior Fellow for Naval Forces and Maritime Security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.
