

CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE PROTECTION OF SUBMARINE CABLES AND PIPELINES: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVES



CIL

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW
National University of Singapore

16 & 17 SEPTEMBER, 2025 (TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY)



Orchard Hotel, Singapore

BACKGROUND

Submarine cables and pipelines traverse the ocean floor, connecting countries and continents and facilitating vital communication and energy services to states and their citizens. They have been described by the General Assembly as “vitally important to the global economy and national security of all States.”

Since the attacks against the Nord Stream pipelines in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Denmark and Sweden in 2022, the vulnerability of submarine cables and pipelines to intentional damage has been thrust into the spotlight. A spate of media reports on damage to submarine fibre optic and power cables in Europe and Asia between 2022 and 2025 have exacerbated concerns about the risks to submarine cables and pipelines against a background of increasing geopolitical complexities, grey zone tactics and armed conflicts. These concerns centre on the potential ramifications for vital government functions, including disruption to essential services to populations and economic. Damage to submarine cables and pipelines may also cause harm to the marine environment and associated ecosystem services.

International law is a critical component of policies and strategies on the protection of submarine cables. Several areas of international law set out the ambit of states’ rights and obligations on different aspects of the protection of submarine cables and pipelines and also provide frameworks for state cooperation. International law also shapes how states, international and regional bodies regulate industry actors, who play a vital role in the protection of submarine cables and pipelines. However, international law typically articulate states’ rights and obligations in general terms, and operationalizing such rights and obligations in practice faces challenges. Moreover, many of these international legal frameworks were adopted at a time when the reliance on submarine cables and pipelines was not foreseen and may not fully address the constantly evolving challenges that confront the protection of submarine cables and pipelines.

OBJECTIVES

It is against this background that the Centre for International Law (CIL) at the National University of Singapore (NUS) is organising a 2-day conference on “International Law and the Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines: Multidimensional Perspectives” on 16 and 17 September 2025 at Orchard Hotel, Singapore. The Conference brings together international lawyers, government officials, policy makers and industry experts to examine the international law that applies to the protection of submarine cables and pipelines from intentional acts of damage by states and non-state actors, with a specific focus on the law of the sea, the law on the use of force, the law of armed conflict and legal frameworks on the protection of submarine cables and pipelines as critical infrastructure.

The Conference aims to deepen an understanding of existing international legal frameworks and to provide a forum for discussing practical solutions consistent with international law to effectively protect submarine cables and pipelines. The Conference will examine a range of issues including:

- Monitoring, detection and information sharing of threats to submarine cables and pipelines;
- National laws and regulations on the protection of submarine cables and pipelines;
- Enforcement and other prevention measures at sea to threatened or actual damage to submarine cables and pipelines
- State responsibility and liability for damage to submarine cables and pipelines
- Grey zone operations, armed conflict and the protection of submarine cables and pipelines
- Protection of submarine cables and pipelines as critical infrastructure
- The role of international and regional bodies on the protection of submarine cables and pipelines
- Recommendations for the strengthening of international law on the protection of submarine cables and pipelines

DAY 1 - SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 (TUESDAY)

All times in SGT

08:30 - 09:00	Registration
09:00 - 09:10	Welcome Remarks Dr. Nilufer Oral, Director, CIL
09:10 - 09:30	Keynote Address Mr. Lionel Yee, Deputy Attorney-General, AGC, Singapore
09:30 - 11:00	Session 1: Monitoring, Detection And Information Sharing
11:00 - 11:30	Break, Photo-Taking for Speakers and Moderators
11:30 - 13:00	Session 2: National Laws And Regulations
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	Session 3: Enforcement And Other Prevention Measures At Sea
15:30 - 16:00	Break
16:30 - 17:30	Session 4: State Responsibility And Liability
17:30	Close of Day 1
18:00 - 20:00	Conference Dinner

DAY 2 - SEPTEMBER 17, 2025 (WEDNESDAY)

09:00 - 10:30	Session 5: Grey Zone Operations And Armed Conflicts
10:30 - 11:00	Break
11:00 - 12:30	Session 6: Submarine Cables And Pipelines As Critical Infrastructure
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:00 - 15:00	Session 7: International And Regional Cooperation On The Protection Of Submarine Cables And Pipelines
15:00 - 15:30	Break
15:30 - 17:00	Session 8: Strengthening The Legal Protection For Submarine Cables And Pipelines – The Way Forward
17:00 - 17:15	Closing Remarks Dr. Tara Davenport, Co-Head, Ocean Law and Policy, CIL

16 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 1

Monitoring, Detection And Information Sharing

This session will provide an overview of the technologies and practices that are currently in place to monitor and detect threats to submarine cables and pipelines as well as mechanisms to facilitate information sharing on potential threats to submarine cables and pipelines between national agencies, cable and pipeline owner/operators and other relevant stakeholders. It will also explore how the legal framework in UNCLOS facilitates or poses obstacles to the monitoring, detection and information sharing of threats to submarine cables and pipelines.

9.30 AM - 11.00 AM	Moderator	
	Prof. Maria Gavouneli , Professor of International Law, Faculty of Law National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Mr. Andy Cowan , Vice President Business Development, FiberSense Ltd, Australia	Distributed Fiber Sensing – Security of Critical Infrastructure at Scale
	Mr. Shanaka Jayasekara , Head of Office, Programme Coordinator (UN Maritime Sanctions), UNODC, Malta	Use of MDA Technology as a Predictive and Forensic Capability in CUI Protection
	Prof. Warwick Gullett , Professor, School of Law, University of Wollongong, Australia	Monitoring threats of physical damage to submarine cables and pipelines: Questions for international law
	Dr. Zhen Sun , Associate Professor (Research / Ocean Sustainability, Governance & Management), WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, World Maritime University, Sweden	Monitoring, detection and information sharing of threats to submarine cables and pipelines

16 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 2

National Laws And Regulations

This session explores how states can strengthen national laws and regulations on the protection of submarine cables and pipelines, including a discussion on flag states' obligations under Article 113 of UNCLOS to criminalize breaking or injury of submarine cables and pipelines beyond territorial sovereignty; and coastal states' prescriptive jurisdiction over acts of damage to submarine cables and pipelines that occur beyond their territorial sea.

11.30 AM - 1.00 PM	Moderator	
	Prof. Dr. Alexander Proelss , Professor and Chair in the International Law of the Sea and International Environmental Law, Public International Law and Public Law, University of Hamburg	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Dr. Tara Davenport , Co-Head, Ocean Law and Policy, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore	Prescriptive Jurisdiction over Intentional Damage to Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Amb. Marie Jacobsson , Member, International Advisory Panel, NUS Centre for International Law, and Associate Professor, University of Lund, Sweden	Threats to critical maritime infrastructure in the Baltic Sea region. Examples of measures taken by States in response.
	Dr. Kristi Land , Director General, Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonia	Estonia's perspective in protecting critical underwater infrastructure through national legislation
	Dr. Su Wai Mon , Research Fellow, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore	Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines: The Legal and Regulatory Practices of ASEAN Member States

16 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 3

Enforcement And Other Prevention Measures At Sea

This session discusses an important tool in the protection of submarine cables and pipelines from intentional damage, enforcement or other prevention measures at sea against vessels suspected of threatened or actual damage to submarine cables and pipelines. These measures involve varying degrees of interference with the navigation of a vessel including stopping, boarding, inspection, searches, escorting, detention and arrest of vessels and/or crew. This session explores the possible legal grounds in UNCLOS that would provide a legal basis for the exercise of such measures including by the flag state, the coastal state and other states that are holders of the freedom to lay submarine cables and pipelines.

2.00 PM - 3.30 PM	Moderator	
	Emeritus Prof. Robert Beckman , Co-Head, Ocean Law and Policy, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Ms. Sari Mäkelä , Senior Ministerial Adviser, Legal Service, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland	Finland's Recent Experiences with Subsea Infrastructure Incidents in the Baltic Sea
	Prof. Alfred H.A. Soons , Professor Emeritus of Public International Law, Utrecht University School of Law, The Netherlands	Coastal State enforcement jurisdiction over vessels suspected of damaging submarine cables and pipelines in its EEZ and on its continental shelf
	Prof. Atsuko Kanehara , Research Director, Canon Institute for Global Studies and Senior Fellow, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan	Enforcement and Other Prevention Measures for Protection of Undersea Infrastructure: A Right to Protect Uses of Ocean
	Dr. Efthymios Papastavridis , Assistant Professor of Law, Faculty of Law, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece	The protection of submarine cables in disputed maritime areas

16 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 4

State Responsibility And Liability

This session explores what are the primary obligations of states in relation to the protection of submarine cables and pipelines and whether flag states of vessels can be held responsible for damage to submarine cables and pipelines caused by their vessels. Key hurdles include attributing the conduct to a state, invoking responsibility, identifying injured states, and associated evidentiary and jurisdictional challenges. The possibility of using UNCLOS Part XV dispute settlement mechanisms will also be explored.

4.00 PM - 5.30 PM	Moderator	
	Dr. Nilüfer Öral , Director, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore, Singapore	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Mr. Rodman Bundy , Senior Partner, Squire Patton Boggs, Singapore	The Freedom to Lay Submarine Cables and Pipelines as a Basis for State Responsibility for Damage to Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Dr. Youri van Logchem , Associate Professor of Law (Law of the Sea and Environmental Law), Norwegian Centre for Law of the Sea, UiT – Arctic University of Norway, Norway	Flag State Responsibility for Damage to Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Dr. Danae Azaria , Associate Professor of International Law, UCL Faculty of Laws; Principal Investigator, ERC Grant on State Silence; Chair, ILA Committee on Submarine Cables and Pipelines under International Law	The State of Necessity and The Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Mr. Andrew Loewenstein , Partner, Foley Hoag	Implementing State Responsibility Through The Use of UNCLOS Part XV Dispute Settlement Mechanisms

17 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 5

Grey Zone Operations And Armed Conflicts

This session explores the protection of submarine cables and pipelines through the lens of jus ad bellum and jus in bello. This includes an exploration of whether intentional damage to submarine cables and pipelines qualify as “armed attacks” under Article 51 and/or Article 2(4) of the UN Charter; as well as whether submarine cables and pipelines are legitimate military targets during armed conflict. This session will primarily include discussion on legal issues surrounding the protection of cables and pipelines in relation to armed conflicts and grey zone operations.

9.00 AM - 10.30 AM	Moderator	
	Ms. Jane Chan , Senior Fellow and Coordinator of Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, RSIS, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Dr. Samuel White , Senior Research Fellow – Peace & Security, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore, Singapore	Prohibited Interventions and Submarine Cables
	Prof. Douglas Guilfoyle , Professor, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, UNSW Sydney, Australia	Rethinking the legal protection of submarine cables in armed conflict
	Prof. Rob McLaughlin , Professor, ANCORS, University of Wollongong, Australia	Could the Undersea Data Cable System be ‘Neutral’?
	Ms. Dita Liliansa , Research Fellow, Ocean Law and Policy, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore, Singapore	The Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines in Armed Conflict: An Asian Perspective

Submarine Cables And Pipelines As Critical Infrastructure

This session analyses the protection of submarine cables and pipelines as critical infrastructure and to what extent various international terrorism conventions relevant to critical infrastructure, norms on responsible use of information communication technologies and cyber infrastructure, and the developing state practice on critical infrastructure legislation applies to submarine cables and pipelines.

11.00 AM - 12.30 PM	Moderator	
	Prof. Alfred H.A. Soons , Professor Emeritus of Public International Law, Utrecht University School of Law, The Netherlands	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Prof. Dr. Alexander Proelss , Professor and Chair in the International Law of the Sea and International Environmental Law, Public International Law and Public Law, University of Hamburg	Protection of Critical Offshore Infrastructure: International Legal Challenges
	Dr. Camino Kavanagh , Visiting Research Fellow, Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy School of Security Studies, Department of War Studies, King's College London, United Kingdom	From Policy to Practice – Subsea Telecommunications Cables as CI
	Ms. Asha Hemrajani , Senior Fellow, Centre of Excellence in National Security (CENS), RSIS, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	Protection of Submarine Cables as Critical Infrastructure: Singapore's Perspective
	Dr. Vu Hai Dang , Expert, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, Vietnam	Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines as Critical Infrastructure: Vietnam's Practice

17 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 7

International And Regional Cooperation On The Protection Of Submarine Cables And Pipelines

International and regional bodies play a crucial role in fostering dialogue and cooperation, harmonizing legal frameworks, and promoting joint initiatives for infrastructure security. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, these organizations can enhance resilience and ensure the sustainable and secure management of undersea assets. This session will examine the role of international and regional bodies on the protection of submarine cables and pipelines, including the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as non-governmental bodies such as the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC), and some of the challenges that pose obstacles to effective cooperation on protection of submarine infrastructure.

1.30 PM - 3.00 PM	Moderator	
	Ms. Loh Woon Sien , Senior Director, Infrastructure Planning & Market Development, Infocomm Media Development Authority	
	Speakers and Topics	
	Mr. Darren Griffiths , Executive Committee Member, International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC); Head of Marine Maintenance, OMS Group Sdn Bhd	Industry Perspectives on the Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Emeritus Prof. Robert Beckman , Co-Head, Ocean Law and Policy, Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore, Singapore	International Organisations and the Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Mr. Kenneth Wong , Senior Director / Senior State Counsel, Attorney-General's Chambers, Singapore	The Role of ASEAN in the Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines
	Ms. Elina Noor , Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Singapore	Protecting Submarine Cables and Pipelines and Challenges for Regional Cooperation by Southeast Asian States

17 SEPTEMBER - SESSION 8

Strengthening The Legal Protection For Submarine Cables And Pipelines – The Way Forward

The round-table discussion focuses on concrete recommendations, including the development of enhanced legal provisions within UNCLOS, the establishment of enforcement measures, and the creation of cooperative bodies to strengthen protection and governance of submarine cables and pipelines amidst evolving geopolitical threats.

3.30 PM – 5.00 PM	Moderator
	Dr. Danae AZARIA , Associate Professor of Public International Law, UCL Faculty of Laws; Principal Investigator, ERC Grant on State Silence; Chair, ILA Committee on Submarine Cables and Pipelines under International Law, United Kingdom
	Speakers
	Mr. Kent BRESSIE , Legal Advisor/ Partner, International Cable Protection Committee/ HWG LLP, United States of America
	Prof. Christian BUEGER , Professor, University of Copenhagen, Denmark/ Germany
	Amb. Rolf Einar FIFE , Special Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
	Ms. Daphne HONG , Solicitor General, Attorney-General's Chambers, Singapore
	Dr. Muhammad Taufan , Official, Directorate of Legal Affairs and Territorial Treaties, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia
	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lan Anh NGUYEN , Vice President, Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam

SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS

MODERATORS & SPEAKERS

For the full programme and speakers' profiles, see tinyurl.com/cil-scpconference-2025.



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