Today marks the 37th anniversary of the adoption of the landmark treaty that introduced new concepts of international law and brought about a more equitable order to maritime rights.

Tommy Koh

For The Straits Times

At a conference in Beijing last year, several Chinese scholars, including one from Singapore, made the surprising statement that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was a product of the West. China was therefore not bound to comply with the convention, in their view.

The truth is that UNCLOS was negotiated by more than 160 countries, the majority by being developing countries. China actively participated in the negotiations and voted for the convention.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea: A revolutionary treaty


The convention is hailed as a groundbreaking international treaty that has transformed the way states interact over the oceans and its resources.

It is a dynamic and evolving instrument that continues to shape maritime law and continue the movement for a more equitable order at sea.

The convention includes a host of provisions that aim to ensure the sustainable and equitable exploitation of marine resources, protect the environment, and promote maritime safety.

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