Professor Liesbeth Lijnzaad

Candidate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for re-election to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) for the 2026-2035 term

Profile

Professor Liesbeth Lijnzaad has been a judge at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) since 2017 and is the Netherlands' candidate for re-election to the ITLOS for the 2026-2035 term. Currently, she is the President of the Tribunal's Chamber for Marine Environment Disputes and a member of the Seabed Disputes Chamber. She is also a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and a conciliator and arbitrator under Annexes V and VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Liesbeth Lijnzaad brings a wealth of international legal experience to the position of judge at the Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Previously, she was the principal Legal Adviser on Public International Law to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Head of the Ministry's International Law Division. In her capacity as a government lawyer, she dealt with many issues of general international law which are of relevance to the interpretation of the law of the sea and obtained solid and extensive knowledge in these fields.

In her capacity as the principal Legal Adviser on Public International Law, Liesbeth Lijnzaad acted as Agent for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in cases before the International Court of Justice, the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and the International Criminal Court. As Agent before the Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Professor Lijnzaad argued the position of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the provisional measures stage of the case concerning the boarding and detention of the Dutch-flagged ship, the Arctic Sunrise, in 2013.

Her work as a government lawyer furthermore brought Liesbeth Lijnzaad a profound understanding of the importance of legal issues in a governmental setting. She has been active in many international fora and has accumulated a wide range of experience in the practice of international law. As Legal Adviser, she participated in the 6th Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the EU's Working Party on Public International Law (COJUR), the EU's Working Party on the Law of the Sea (COMAR), and the Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI) of the Council of Europe, which she also chaired.

Liesbeth Lijnzaad's contribution to the development of the law of the sea, an area where her expertise encompasses such diverse issues as fisheries, maritime delimitations, deep-seabed mining, shipping and marine biodiversity, is also evident from the following. She has chaired meetings of both

the Council and the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and contributed to the ISA's work during its formative years. She also co-chaired the UNGA Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ process), guiding part of the work towards establishing the BBNJ Agreement in 2023.

In addition to her current role as judge at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Liesbeth Lijnzaad is an experienced academic who combines a profound knowledge of general international law with comprehensive, specialist knowledge of the law of the sea. As endowed professor of Practice of International Law at Maastricht University in the Netherlands, she teaches international law of the sea and is PhD supervisor to a broad group of international PhD candidates. Professor Lijnzaad is an occasional lecturer at the Dutch Academy for Government Lawyers in The Hague (*Academie voor Overheidsjuristen*), the International Boundary Research Unit (IBRU) at Durham University, the Geneva Graduate Institute, and Kadir Has University in Istanbul. Liesbeth Lijnzaad also chairs the Supervisory Board of the Asser Institute in The Hague.

Acknowledged for her understanding of contemporary legal issues concerning the oceans, Liesbeth Lijnzaad will, if re-elected, continue to offer broad expertise, experience and insights into the law of the sea and general international law in relation to the work of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Liesbeth Lijnzaad studied history and holds Master's degrees in International Law and Dutch Law from the University of Amsterdam. At Maastricht University, she obtained a PhD in International Law on the subject of reservations to UN human rights instruments. In 2025, Aalborg University in Denmark honoured Liesbeth Lijnzaad with a doctorate *iuris honoris causa* in recognition of her impressive career and exceptional contributions to international law.

Liesbeth Lijnzaad is a native speaker of Dutch and has full professional proficiency in English and French, as well as working proficiency in German.

Professional experience

2017 – present	International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) *Judge (currently President of the Chamber for Marine Environment Disputes, and member of the Seabed Disputes Chamber)*
2011 – present	University of Maastricht, the Netherlands *Endowed professor of Practice of International Law (part-time)*
2006 – 2017	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands *Legal Adviser and Head of the International Law Division*

Diplomatic experience (selection)

2016	*Chair*, European Union Working Party on Public International Law (COJUR) on behalf of the Netherlands
2011 – 2017	*Acting President*, Administrative Council of the Permanent Court of Arbitration
2006 – 2017	*Member*, Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI), Council of Europe
2006 – 2017	*Member*, Working Party on Public International Law (COJUR), European Union
2010 – 2015	*Co-chair*, UNGA Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction
2013 – 2014	*President*, Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI), Council of Europe
2011	*Vice Chair*, 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva
2008	*President*, Council of International Seabed Authority
1997, 2004 –2005	*Chair*, European Union Working Party on the Law of the Sea (COMAR) on behalf of Luxembourg and the Netherlands
2000	*President*, Assembly of the International Seabed Authority

Negotiations (selection)

2014 - 2015	Maritime boundary negotiations between Saint Kitts and Nevis and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and between France and the Kingdom of the Netherlands
2012 - 2014	Westereems Treaty between Germany and the Kingdom of the Netherlands
2001 – 2008	ISA Regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides
2005	Amendments to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA) and related protocol

1997 – 2000	ISA Regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules
1999	UNESCO Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
1996 – 1998	Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
1996	IMO London Protocol
1994 – 1995	UN Agreement on Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks

Litigation and advisory opinions

- *OBB Personenverkehr AG v. Carol P. Sachs*, US Supreme Court – *Amicus Curiae* on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (together with Switzerland) (2014)
- *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co*., US Supreme Court, *Amicus Curiae* on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (together with the United Kingdom) (2013)
- Request for Advisory Opinion submitted by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), ITLOS (case 21) – Agent for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2013)
- Arctic Sunrise Case (*Kingdom of the Netherlands v. Russian Federation),* Provisional Measures, ITLOS (case 22) – Agent for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2013)
- Arctic Sunrise Arbitration (*Kingdom of the Netherlands v. Russian Federation*), Permanent Court of Arbitration – Agent for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2013)
- Responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to Area, Advisory Opinion of the Seabed Disputes Chamber, ITLOS (case 17) – Agent for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2011)
- Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo, Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice – Agent for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2010)

Publications

For a complete overview of professional activities and publications, see: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1931-0212

Education

2025	Aalborg University, Denmark *Doctorate iuris honoris causa*
1994	Limburg University (now: Maastricht University), Maastricht, the Netherlands *PhD dissertation: 'Reservations to UN human rights treaties, ratify and ruin?'*
1987	University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands *Master's degree in Dutch Law*
1986	Asser Institute, The Hague, the Netherlands *Research training course in International and European Law*
1985	University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands *Master's degree in International Law*
1984 – 1986	University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands Studied *History*

Personal details

Name:	Liesbeth Lijnzaad
Nationality:	Dutch
Year of birth:	1960

Languages

Dutch:	Native proficiency
English:	Full professional proficiency
French:	Full professional proficiency
German:	Professional working proficiency
Spanish:	Basic working proficiency

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