



## Determination of the Name Change of the South China Sea Becoming the North Natuna Sea Reviewed from *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982*

Sobar Sukmana<sup>1</sup>; Jadug Imam Anggoro<sup>2</sup>; Herli Antoni<sup>3</sup>; Tuti Susilawati K<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1234</sup> Pakuan University, Indonesia

[sobar.sukmana@unpak.ac.id](mailto:sobar.sukmana@unpak.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>; [jianggoro2016@yahoo.com](mailto:jianggoro2016@yahoo.com)<sup>2</sup>; [herli.antoni@unpak.ac.id](mailto:herli.antoni@unpak.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>; [Susilawatituti50@gmail.com](mailto:Susilawatituti50@gmail.com)<sup>4</sup>

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### Abstract

This study analyzes the determination of the change of the name of the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea from the perspective of international law, especially based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. The main focus is on how the regulation of maritime areas under UNCLOS 1982 and the Indonesian government's actions in defending sovereignty in the North Natuna Sea face China's unilateral claims. This analysis confirms that Indonesia's determination to rename the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea is based on recognized international law, especially the 1982 UNCLOS. China's unilateral claims, including the Nine-Dash Line and traditional fishing grounds, are not recognized under the 1982 UNCLOS and are considered a violation of Indonesia's sovereign rights. Indonesia has taken concrete steps to defend its sovereignty, including registering the name change with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and keeping it at the United Nations Headquarters, ensuring international recognition of Indonesia's claims. In addition, Indonesia has increased its defense capabilities in the Natuna region through military build-ups, including building military bases and conducting patrols, and has engaged in diplomatic efforts. These comprehensive measures demonstrate Indonesia's commitment to upholding international law and protecting its national interests from external claims.

**Keywords:** *UNCLOS 1982; EEZ; Nine Dash-Line; Territorial Sea; Continental Shelf*

### Introduction

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world with more than 17,000 islands with a water area of 5.8 million km<sup>2</sup> and a coastline of 81,900 km. Its location between the two continents of Asia and Australia and the two Indian and Pacific oceans makes Indonesia's position very strategic, both geopolitically and geostrategically. As an archipelagic country, Indonesia has a great interest in defending

sovereignty and sovereign rights over its maritime areas, especially in areas that are directly adjacent to other countries.<sup>1</sup>

One of the areas that has strategic significance is the North Natuna Sea, part of Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that borders China's claimed territory in the South China Sea. The North Natuna Sea holds a huge wealth of natural resources, including natural gas reserves of up to 222 trillion cubic feet, as well as abundant fisheries potential. However, the region has often been at the center of tensions due to China's unilateral claims through the Nine-Dash Line concept, which claims nearly 90% of the South China Sea as its historic territory. This claim is clearly contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982, where Indonesia has ratified the convention through Law Number 17 of 1985.<sup>2</sup>

Natuna waters are very rich in natural resources and have the potential to be a strategic area. Confirmed in the Decree of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia No. 47 of 2016, it was noted that the Natuna Sea is filled with various marine life, ranging from small pelagic fish, Demersal fish, Reef fish, Penaeid shrimp, lobsters, crabs, to squid.<sup>3</sup> Not only the richness of marine life, based on the records of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (EMR), the Natuna East Block has a volume of *Initial Gas in Place (IGIP)* of 222 trillion cubic feet (tcf), as well as reserves of 46 tcf, which makes Indonesia's EEZ targeted by many parties, including China.<sup>4</sup>

From the perspective of international law, Indonesia's position is actually not as a party to a direct dispute over sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. However, the northern region of Natuna is included in Indonesia's EEZ which is recognized under the 1982 UNCLOS, so China's claims through the Nine-Dash Line overlap with Indonesia's maritime jurisdiction. This poses serious implications for sovereignty, national security, and the management of marine natural resources. The North Natuna Sea itself has enormous economic potential, especially in the energy and fisheries sectors. Based on data from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (EMR), the East Natuna Block has natural gas reserves of up to 222 trillion cubic feet (tcf), making it one of the regions with the largest oil and gas potential in Southeast Asia. In addition, this area is also rich in marine biological resources such as pelagic fish, shrimp, squid, and other marine life that are the economic basis of the coastal community of Natuna.

As a decisive step in strengthening sovereignty and national identity, the Indonesian government determined to change the name of the waters in the northern part of Natuna from the "South China Sea" to the "North Natuna Sea." This determination was officially announced by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) through the Decree of the Minister of KKP Number 47 of 2017 and registered with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). This action is not merely symbolic, but is a diplomatic and juridical effort to affirm Indonesia's sovereign rights based on the provisions of international maritime law, in particular Articles 56 and 57 of the 1982 UNCLOS which govern the rights of coastal states to natural resources in the EEZ as far as 200 nautical miles. In addition to the international legal aspect, this naming policy also has political and defensive implications. The Indonesian government is strengthening its presence in the region through the construction of a military base in Natuna, increased maritime security patrols by the Indonesian Navy, and multilateral diplomatic cooperation to ensure international recognition of Indonesia's maritime boundaries. Thus, the change in the name of the North Natuna Sea not only serves as a form of affirmation of national identity, but also as

<sup>1</sup>Sefriani, *The Role of International Law in Contemporary International Relations*, (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2016), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Nuans Asa Septari B. et al., "Indonesia's Response to the Chinese Threat in the North Natuna Sea During the Leadership of President Joko Widodo", *Journal of the National Institutes of the Republic of Indonesia*, published by the National Resilience Institute of the Republic of Indonesia, (Vol. 10 No. 1 of 2022) : 11. Available at : <https://s.id/ciFuP>. retrieved December 01, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Indonesia, *Decree of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries on Estimation of Potential, Number of Allowable Catches, and Utilization Levels of Fish Resources in the State Fisheries Management Area of the Republic of Indonesia*, Kepmen-KKP Number 47/KEPMEN-KP/2016.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

a concrete step in maintaining territorial integrity and strengthening Indonesia's position in the eyes of the international world.

This study examines how the legal basis, juridical basis, and implications of the change in the name of the sea are reviewed from the perspective of UNCLOS 1982. Through a normative approach and analysis of national regulations and international practices, this study seeks to explain the extent to which Indonesian government actions have international legal legitimacy and how these measures contribute to the strengthening of state sovereignty in maritime border areas.

## **Method**

This study uses a normative juridical approach supported by empirical data. The normative juridical approach is used to examine the legal norms contained in national laws and instruments of international law, especially the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) 1982 which is the basis for determining the change of the name of the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea. Meanwhile, an empirical approach is used to strengthen the results of the study through field data obtained from interviews with resource persons in related agencies and communities in the Natuna area.

The nature of this research is descriptive analytical, which aims to describe and systematically analyze the legal basis, implementation, and implications of the Indonesian government's policy in determining the change in the name of the sea. The types of data used include secondary data in the form of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials obtained through literature studies, as well as primary data from direct interviews with competent parties, such as officials at the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Pushidrosal, and the Natuna Regional Government.

The data collection technique is carried out through literature studies and interviews, then analyzed using the qualitative analysis method, which is to examine and interpret data logically, systematically, and related to the theory and applicable legal provisions. Through this method, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive picture of the legal legitimacy and implications of the determination of the North Natuna Sea in the perspective of international maritime law.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **How Is the Change of the Name of the Sea Area Regulated According to the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* 1982**

The renaming of the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea is an act based on recognized international law, and it illustrates how international maritime law plays a role in Indonesia's efforts to defend the country's sovereignty in a complex and challenging situation in the South China Sea region. One of the basic principles relevant in the context of this name change is the sovereign rights of coastal states, as mandated by UNCLOS 1982.

*The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) 1982 is the result of the codification of international maritime law which is the basis for regulating all aspects related to the utilization, management, and determination of the boundaries of maritime areas of coastal states. Indonesia has ratified the convention through Law Number 17 of 1985 concerning the Ratification of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) 1982, so that all provisions in it have binding legal force in the jurisdiction of Indonesia.

In the context of changing the name of the sea area, the 1982 UNCLOS does not explicitly regulate the procedure or procedure for naming the sea area. However, this convention affirms important principles related to *coastal state sovereignty* and *sovereign rights* over waters and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Based on Article 2 paragraph (1) of the 1982 UNCLOS, the sovereignty of a country includes land areas, inland waters, and territorial seas up to 12 nautical miles from the baseline. Meanwhile, Article 56 grants sovereign rights to coastal states to explore, exploit, conserve, and manage natural resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone as far as 200 nautical miles. Thus, the regulation and naming of marine areas is a manifestation of the exercise of the sovereignty of coastal states within the limits of their jurisdiction. The state has the authority to name the maritime areas included in its jurisdiction as a form of national identity and affirmation of territorial sovereignty. In this case, the action of the Government of Indonesia to change the name of the "South China Sea" to "North Natuna Sea" is legal under international law because it was carried out within the territory of Indonesia's EEZ which is recognized under UNCLOS 1982.

This step is strengthened by the basis of national law, namely the Decree of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia Number 47 of 2017 concerning the Determination of Sea Names in Indonesian Territory. This decree establishes 111 national sea names and officially changes the designation of the South China Sea in the northern part of the Natuna Islands to the North Natuna Sea. The determination was also registered with the *International Hydrographic Organization* (IHO) to be recognized internationally. In addition, Law Number 43 of 2008 concerning State Territory in Article 4 paragraph (2) emphasizes that the territorial boundaries of Indonesia include land, sea, and air, which are determined based on laws and regulations and international law. This means that Indonesia has the right to determine, regulate, and name its maritime areas in accordance with the principles of state sovereignty recognized by the international community.

Changing the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea is in Indonesia's interest and Indonesia's will related to the claim to Indonesia's EEZ area and the continental shelf. This claim is opposed by Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia because based on China's argument, it is not based on the rules stated in UNCLOS Article 51 paragraph (1), namely that a country's traditional fishing area is not a territorial area, but an area that is determined because fishermen have been fishing for generations long before UNCLOS 1982 so that every coastal country must respect the territory. Meanwhile, China, through its argument, claims that the South China Sea is their Traditional Fishing Ground area and makes territorial claims to it, thus causing an overlap in the maritime sovereignty of Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia's EEZ area in the South China Sea. Indonesia responded to the conflict that occurred between China and Malaysia-Vietnam through the Circular Memorandum of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia Number 480/POL-703/VII/10 dated July 8, 2010 in New York. On the three points conveyed by Indonesia in the circular memorandum, the Indonesian government considers that Indonesia is not a disputed country. Even so, Indonesia rejected China's claim because it was unfounded and violated existing international rules.<sup>5</sup>

The act of changing the name and registration carried out by Indonesia to the IHO (*International Hydrographic Organization*) is one of the actions to clarify the legal basis, sovereign rights, and security of Indonesia for the Natuna Islands area, so that there will be no unilateral claims by other countries over the territory. However, the action taken by Indonesia received a negative response from the Chinese Government. China considers that what is done by the Indonesian Government does not have international strength, because the South China Sea has been internationally agreed upon and recognized by world countries. However, according to the applicable law and rules, Indonesia has applied the concept of international law well and to ensure legal certainty, Indonesia has followed the procedure set by the

<sup>5</sup> Yvonne is a Yankee because it is raining. et al., "Changing the Name of Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone in the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea (1082-2017)", *Nusantara Hasana Journal*, published by Yayasan Nusantara Hasana Berdikari, (Vol. 3 No. 2 of 2023): 23. Available at: <https://nusantarahasanajournal.com/index.php/nhj/article/download/917/755/3440>. Retrieved April 29, 2025.

IHO (*International Hydrographic Organization*), namely registering the North Natuna Sea area with the IHO (*International Hydrographic Organization*) and deposited at the United Nations (United Nations) Headquarters, so that other countries can understand that the area is an Exclusive Economic Zone owned by the Indonesian government and is called the North Natuna Sea.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of international maritime law, the change in the name of the sea area is also related to the aspects of delimitation (determination of boundaries) and jurisdiction, as stipulated in Article 15, Article 74, and Article 83 of the 1982 UNCLOS. The three articles regulate the determination of territorial sea boundaries, EEZs, and continental shelves between countries fairly through bilateral agreements. As long as the naming or determination of the maritime area is carried out within the limits of a legitimate jurisdiction and does not violate the rights of other countries, such action does not conflict with the 1982 UNCLOS. Therefore, the regulation of changing the name of the sea area can be seen as part of the exercise of the sovereign rights of coastal states. In the Indonesian context, the policy of determining the North Natuna Sea has two main functions, namely:

1. As an instrument of law and diplomacy to affirm Indonesia's sovereign rights to its legitimate maritime territory, and
2. As a strategic defense measure in dealing with China's unilateral claims through the Nine-Dash Line that have no basis in international law, as stated in the 2016 *Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)* decision in the case of the Philippines and China.

Thus, based on UNCLOS 1982, the change in the name of the sea area is a form of affirmation of legitimate sovereignty as long as it is carried out within the boundaries of the recognized jurisdiction. Indonesia has exercised these rights based on international law, strengthened its legal position through the ratification of the 1982 UNCLOS, and supported the policy with clear national regulations. This step not only strengthens Indonesia's territorial integrity but also affirms the country's position in international maritime governance in accordance with the principles of *mare clausum* and sovereign equality of states as stipulated in the United Nations Charter (UN Charter) Article 2 paragraph (1).

### **WHAT ARE THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OF INDONESIA IN DEFENDING THE NORTH NATUNA SEA AGAINST CHINA'S CLAIM TO A UNILATERAL DECISION (*NINE-DASH LINE*)?**

The North Natuna Sea is part of Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which is internationally recognized through the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)* 1982. Under Articles 55–75 of the 1982 UNCLOS, each coastal state has sovereign rights over natural resources up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline. Indonesia has ratified the convention through Law No. 17 of 1985, so China's unilateral claims through the *Nine-Dash Line* have no legal basis.

Instead, China claims most of the South China Sea, including areas included in Indonesia's EEZ, through the "*Nine-Dash Line*", which is a map of the nine-dash line that was unilaterally drawn up and has no basis in international law. This claim is contrary to the principles of UNCLOS 1982 as well as the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling, which rejected China's historical claim to the South China Sea. Therefore, Indonesia rejects all forms of China's unilateral claims and asserts that the North Natuna Sea area is a legitimate part of Indonesia's EEZ. China's claim to include part of the North Natuna Sea in its "*traditional fishing ground*" is considered to violate Articles 3 and 47 of the 1982 UNCLOS regarding territorial sea boundaries and the direct baseline of island countries. In response, the Government of Indonesia took a series of political, diplomatic, legal, and defense measures to defend sovereignty in the region.

<sup>6</sup> Alief Sambogo, "Naming of the North Natuna Sea by the Government of Indonesia in the Perspective of International Law", *Jurist-Diction*, published by Universitas Airlangga, (Vol. 1 No. 2 of 2018): 389, available at <https://ejournal.unair.ac.id/JD/article/view/10787/pdf>, accessed on April 30, 2025.

The Indonesian government can carry out *deterrence* efforts by threatening China firmly to arrest and execute foreign vessels that illegally enter Natuna waters in accordance with the provisions of Law Number 5 of 1983. There is a lawsuit about the Exclusive Economic Zone, namely Law Number 5 of 1983. This law contains Indonesia's borders consisting of the seabed, land in the ocean and with an outermost limit of 200 miles from the seashore line of Indonesia's sovereign territory. This legal provision is Indonesia's promise to defend Indonesia from China's *nine-dash-line* claim. *The nine dash line* itself is contrary to International Law, namely UNCLOS 1982.

In addition, Indonesia is active in regional forums such as ASEAN to strengthen *the Code of Conduct* (CoC) in the South China Sea, in order to create common norms that guarantee stability and prevent armed conflict. This attitude reflects Indonesia's free and active foreign policy, where Indonesia maintains good relations with China, but still maintains the principles of sovereignty and the rule of international law. Under the leadership of Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, Indonesia also summoned China's diplomatic representatives to submit an official memorandum of protest over violations committed by Chinese *Coast Guard* vessels against Indonesian law enforcement officials in the Natuna EEZ area.

### Diplomatic Steps and International Law

In the face of China's unilateral claims, the Government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has taken a series of diplomatic and international legal steps. Indonesia has sent a diplomatic note to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) asserting that *the Nine-Dash Line* has no legal basis under the 1982 UNCLOS, as well as rejecting all Chinese claims that overlap with Indonesia's EEZ in the North Natuna Sea. The Indonesian government also officially registered the name "North Natuna Sea" with the *International Hydrographic Organization* (IHO) in 2017, which was later legalized and internationally recognized. This step not only clarifies Indonesia's geographical position on the world map, but also serves as a form of affirmation of Indonesia's sovereignty over the sea area. In addition, Indonesia is also active in the ASEAN regional forum to strengthen *the Code of Conduct* (CoC) in the South China Sea, in order to establish common norms that ensure stability and avoid armed conflict. Through this approach, Indonesia affirms the principle of free and active foreign policy, which is to maintain good relations with all parties without sacrificing national sovereignty.

The Indonesian government, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, has taken a decisive diplomatic step by summoning China's representative, Sun Wei Dei, who is acting as the Chargé d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta. This step was taken to submit a diplomatic protest memorandum on the issue of China's claim to the nine-dash line. The protest memorandum includes several important points:<sup>7</sup>

1. Violation of Indonesia's sovereign rights and jurisdiction where Indonesia expresses objection to China's claims that threaten Indonesia's sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Economic Zone and Continental Shelf area;
2. Protests against the obstruction of law enforcement in which Indonesia denounced the efforts made by the Chinese *Coast Guard* to obstruct law enforcement carried out by Indonesian authorities in the area of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf. This action is considered a violation of international law and Indonesian sovereignty;
3. The affirmation of Indonesia's territorial sea sovereignty where the protest memorandum also highlights violations of Indonesia's territorial sea sovereignty. Indonesia asserts that China's *nine-dash-line* claim in the North Natuna Sea exceeds the limits set by international law, namely UNCLOS 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Emerentiana Tulak Andi., et al, "Conflict Against China's Claim to Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone in the North Natuna Sea", *Journal of Thought and Research of the Social Sciences, Law & Teaching*, published by UNM Journal, (Vol. 19 No. 1 of 2024): 162, available at: <https://ojs.unm.ac.id/supremasi/article/download/60920/27397>.

In addition to diplomatic channels, Indonesia is strengthening its international legal approach to support its position. Indonesia adheres to the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* that every country participating in the international convention is bound to comply with the content of the agreement in good faith. Since Indonesia has ratified UNCLOS 1982 through Law Number 17 of 1985, all of Indonesia's actions at sea, including boundary setting, resource management, and naming of marine areas, are based on strong legal legitimacy. On the other hand, China, which is also a party to the 1982 UNCLOS, is supposed to be subject to the same provisions, but in practice violates the articles of the convention through claims.

### Defense and National Security Measures

The Indonesian government not only relies on diplomacy, but also strengthens the aspects of national defense and security in the Natuna region. The Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian National Army (TNI) designated Natuna as the Front Guard of State Defense. In addition, Indonesia routinely conducts joint maritime patrol operations between the Indonesian Navy, Bakamla (Maritime Security Agency), and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP). This operation aims to prevent *illegal fishing* and violations by foreign vessels in Indonesia's EEZ. Based on Article 16 of Law Number 5 of 1983, any resource exploitation activities in the EEZ without a permit can be subject to criminal sanctions and fines, thus becoming the legal basis for enforcing Indonesia's sovereignty at sea. These measures are also supported by Law Number 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Army, which states that the TNI is tasked with upholding state sovereignty and maintaining the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Thus, the presence of the TNI in Natuna is not only symbolic, but is a real manifestation of law enforcement and national defense.

National security is a concept owned by a country that is oriented towards defense and military resilience. National security is the main task of a country in eliminating threats that are then outlined in the country's defense strategy. In accordance with the development of today's threats, the Indonesian government is faced with the challenge of military and non-military threats so that in terms of their solution, it can also use military force.

The efforts made by the Government of Indonesia are by changing the name to affect the geopolitics of the area where the name of the North Natuna Sea shows Indonesia's maritime rights over the Natuna Waters. Indonesia's goal in this name change is not to increase conflict with China, but rather to defend the Natuna Islands Waters which belong to Indonesia. In addition to changing the name, the form of handling to deal with China is to resolve conflicts peacefully through negotiations and make bilateral agreements between the Government of Indonesia and the Government of China on the North Natuna Sea so that it can be clarified and find a way out of the conflict that occurs.<sup>8</sup>

### The Role of Local Government and Economic-Social Approaches

The Government of Indonesia and the Regional Government of the Riau Islands work together to be able to defend the sovereignty and integrity of Indonesia and also to defend Indonesia's economic interests to implement excellent measures to be able to defend the maritime area of the Natuna Islands by strengthening the military fleet in the Natuna archipelago area, protecting fishing rights and also seeking solutions to international institutions. These efforts prove that Indonesia is serious about being able to defend its territory and shows that Indonesia is a country that prioritizes the law, not just as a country of historical claims.

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<sup>8</sup> Febriyansyah Rahmat Maulana and Rahayu Repindowaty, "Analysis of Permanent Verdicts *Court of Arbitration* Against the Nine Dash Line Claim: A Case Study of the North Natuna Region Claim", *Journal of International Law*, published by Journal Unja (Vol. 1 No. 2 of 2020): 258.

The Natuna Regency Regional Government has a strategic role as the front line in maintaining the sovereignty and integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in the northern border area. As the outermost region that is directly adjacent to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the South China Sea, Natuna is an important point in the implementation of national policies related to maritime defense, border security, and marine resource management. Therefore, the involvement of local governments is not only administrative, but also an integral part of the national strategy to assert the state's presence (*sovereignty by presence*) in border areas.

The Regional Government of Natuna Regency and Riau Islands Province plays an active role in supporting national policies to maintain sovereignty in the North Natuna Sea. The local government implements a border-based development program. This step aims to ensure the presence of the community as a guardian of sovereignty (*sovereignty by presence*). By strengthening the local economy and increasing socio-economic activities in Natuna, the local government contributes directly to strengthening Indonesia's legal and political position in the region.

These efforts include improving fisheries infrastructure, marine transportation, as well as the construction of port and logistics facilities to support the economic activities of coastal communities. Local governments are working with relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) and the Ministry of Defense, in expanding market access for local fishermen's catches, so that communities have a strong economic dependence on their own territory. This step also serves to discourage the presence of foreign fishermen who often enter Indonesian waters illegally. In addition to strengthening the economy, local governments play an active role in increasing legal awareness and nationalism of coastal communities. Education about the boundaries of the EEZ, Indonesia's sovereign rights based on UNCLOS 1982, and the importance of protecting marine resources is carried out in a sustainable manner. From the social side, local governments build a community empowerment-based approach. Through people's economic programs such as strengthening fisheries cooperatives, providing subsidies for environmentally friendly fishing gear, and improving education and health facilities, people in the Natuna area are encouraged to settle down and work in the area. This social approach fosters a sense of belonging to border areas and becomes an effective social fortress to maintain the integrity of national sovereignty.

The government also made Natuna an "integrated maritime defense center", where military, economic, and social activities support each other. This is in accordance with Law Number 23 of 2019 concerning the Management of National Resources for National Defense, which states that threats to the EEZ are included in the category of threats to the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia.

### **Commitment to International Law and Peace**

Indonesia's commitment to international law and peace is clearly reflected in its attitude towards China's unilateral claims through the Nine-Dash Line in the North Natuna Sea. As a sovereign archipelagic state committed to the international legal order, Indonesia insists that the settlement of any maritime dispute should be based on law, not military force. Indonesia adheres to the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982, which has been ratified through Law Number 17 of 1985. With the ratification, Indonesia is bound to consistently enforce the provisions of international maritime law, including in maintaining the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as far as 200 nautical miles from the base line in accordance with Articles 56 and 57 of the 1982 UNCLOS.

In addition to the legal and diplomatic channels, Indonesia strengthens its commitment through a peace-oriented approach to defense and regional development. The government built an integrated military base and strengthened maritime patrols in Natuna to prevent violations of sovereignty without provoking a military escalation. On the other hand, the local government and the Natuna people are



involved in strengthening the local economy and social activities as a form of sovereignty by presence — affirming sovereignty through the existence and real activities of citizens.

Indonesia affirms its consistent stance to resolve any dispute through peaceful channels and international law, not military force. The government rejects any provocation that could muddy bilateral relations with China, but maintains the principle that international law is the primary basis of relations between countries. As an active member of the United Nations (UN) and *the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea* (ITLOS), Indonesia is committed that all maritime dispute settlements must be carried out in accordance with international legal mechanisms. This approach not only strengthens Indonesia's diplomatic position, but also enhances Indonesia's reputation as a country that upholds the rule of international law.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of research related to the Determination of the Change of the Name of the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea Reviewed from *the United Nations Convention On The Law Of The Sea* 1982, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. *The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) does not explicitly regulate the mechanism for naming or changing the name of the sea, but provides a legal basis for coastal states to determine, affirm, and manage their maritime territories in accordance with the principles of sovereignty and jurisdiction of international maritime law. Through the provisions of Articles 3, 47, 55, and 56 of UNCLOS 1982, coastal states have sovereign rights over territorial seas as far as 12 nautical miles and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) as far as 200 nautical miles from the baseline. This provision is the legal basis for a state to determine the boundaries and names of its maritime areas, as long as it does not conflict with the principles of stability and international recognition. In the context of Indonesia, the change of the name of the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea is an implementation of these sovereign rights, as affirmed through Law Number 17 of 1985 concerning the Ratification of UNCLOS 1982 and Law Number 43 of 2008 concerning State Territories. This step was also registered with the *International Hydrographic Organization* (IHO) as a form of global legitimacy. Therefore, the regulation and implementation of the change in the name of the maritime area by Indonesia has been in accordance with the principles of international maritime law and is a tangible manifestation of the affirmation of sovereignty and clarity of Indonesia's maritime jurisdiction in the eyes of the world.
2. The actions taken by the Regional Government and the Central Government of Indonesia in defending the North Natuna Sea against China's unilateral claims through the Nine-Dash Line are a tangible form of Indonesia's commitment to upholding sovereignty and sovereign rights in accordance with *the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) 1982, which has been ratified through Law Number 17 of 1985. The Indonesian government has consistently rejected China's claims that it has no basis in international law through various diplomatic measures, such as the submission of a memorandum of protest to the United Nations and *the International Hydrographic Organization* (IHO), as well as juridical affirmation by renaming the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea. In the defense sector, Indonesia strengthened its military presence in the Natuna region, increased sea patrols by the Indonesian Navy, Bakamla, and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and built integrated bases to maintain security and sovereignty. Local governments also play a role by strengthening the local economy and the participation of coastal communities as a form of non-military defense. Overall, the synergy between the central and regional governments in the fields of law, diplomacy, defense, and regional development reflects that Indonesia is a country that upholds the rule of international law and upholds its maritime sovereignty peacefully, firmly, and with dignity before the world.

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