Prep: UNSC open debate on emerging tech and maritime security

Thursday 29 October 2026 · prepared Wednesday 28 October

What, when, who

- **Title:** "Emerging technologies and maritime security: implications for peace and security", open debate under "Maintenance of international peace and security". Concept note: S/2026/818. (Spokesperson's Council programme for 28 Oct, announcement section)
- **Time:** 10 AM ET / 14:00 GMT, Security Council Chamber. US clocks change 1 Nov, so Thursday is still EDT. (Spokesperson notice; UN monthly programme of work, revised 26 Oct, lists it A.M.; Week Ahead says "in the morning")
- **Chair:** Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. FM George Gerapetritis also attends. (Council President Aglaia Balta's 1 Oct press conference; Greek News USA, 24 Oct)
- **Briefers:** not public in anything I could read. Expect them in tonight's Spokesperson programme for 29 Oct and the presidency's daily POW.
- **Format notes:** non-members inscribe via eSpeakers; statements capped at three minutes, so expect a long speakers list.
- **Outcome:** no presidential statement or resolution announced in any source I read. Inferred: none expected, since Russia questions whether AI belongs in the Council at all.

The concept note in three lines

I couldn't open S/2026/818 itself, so this comes from Balta's press conference and summaries of the October programme:

1. Build on France's September AI debate by asking how emerging tech can **advance** maritime security, for example AI fusing satellite, radar and ship tracking (AIS) data for maritime domain awareness.
2. Weigh the new vulnerabilities: cyber operations, autonomous systems, and attacks on maritime infrastructure.

3. Keep technology use grounded in international law, human oversight and accountability. Balta: "We are not one of those who only see risks… but we do not want to be left behind."

Story angles for TV

1. **Hormuz and the Red Sea as a tech war at sea.** Mines, drones, uncrewed boats and GPS spoofing are already shutting shipping lanes. The Council couldn't agree on Hormuz: China and Russia vetoed the Bahrain-led draft on 7 April (11 for, 2 abstentions). Does a tech framing get past that split?
2. **A shipping nation's signature event.** Mitsotakis chaired Greece's May 2025 maritime security open debate. Now he's back, adding AI. Previews of his UNGA speech in September said he would argue AI risks can't be left to companies' voluntary self-regulation.
3. **Cables and the shadow fleet.** In April, Latvia warned of deliberate sabotage of subsea cables, made harder to deal with by shadow fleet vessels. Russia rejects the "shadow fleet" concept. Latvia takes the Council presidency on 1 November and plans its own emerging-tech debate.
4. **The US against global AI rules.** On 23 September, Michael Kratsios said the US "totally rejects any attempt to construct a globalist scheme of control of superintelligence". China called AI "a shared asset for all humanity" that shouldn't be a rich countries' game. Russia says specialized forums are the right venue.
5. **Europe's bid to make AI permanent Council business.** Greece and Latvia launched an Informal Expert Group on Technology, Peace and Security. PassBlue counts Thursday as the Council's eighth AI meeting since ChatGPT launched.

Possible interview asks

- **Mitsotakis or Gerapetritis** at the stakeout, on Hormuz, drones and whether Greece wants a Council product.
- **Latvia's Ambassador Sanita Pavluta-Deslandes,** on the expert group and November's debate.
- **Liberia's representative.** Liberia's vessel was seized by Iran on 22 April, and in April Liberia proposed an IMO-linked incident tracking mechanism. That's a Global South voice with a ship in the fight.

Likely positions (from earlier meetings, not yet Thursday's)

- **US:** opposes centralized global AI governance, prefers national capacity and tech exports. On the sea, blames Iran for Hormuz and calls for a "coalition for maritime freedom" (Sept 2025 and Sept 2026 AI debates; April 2026 maritime debate).
- **China:** UN-centred, inclusive governance, digital sovereignty and capacity building for developing countries. Blames US and Israeli strikes as the root cause of the Hormuz crisis.
- **Russia:** questions whether the Council should cover AI or maritime security at all, points to specialized forums such as the Geneva group of experts on autonomous weapons, and warns against seeing AI only as a risk.
- **African members (DRC, Liberia, Somalia; "A3" label inferred):** Somalia says "Africa cannot remain merely a market for systems developed elsewhere". Liberia wants human control over lethal force and backs a Council working group on AI. The DRC points to the Yaoundé Code of Conduct on maritime security.

Key facts

- **First Council AI meeting:** July 2023, under the UK presidency. James Cleverly chaired, with briefings from Guterres, Anthropic's Jack Clark and Zeng Yi. (UN press release SC/15359)
- **September 2025, Republic of Korea:** AI open debate. Guterres called for a legally binding ban, by 2026, on lethal autonomous weapons operating without human control. (SC/16180)
- **23 September 2026, France:** briefers were Yoshua Bengio, Sam Altman, Dario Amodei and Clément Delangue. No outcome. (Meeting 10228 transcript)
- **27 April 2026, Bahrain:** maritime debate on Hormuz. The IMO said about 20,000 seafarers and 2,000 vessels were trapped in the Gulf. (Meeting 10145 transcript)
- **Resolution 2817 (March 2026):** condemned Iranian attacks on seven neighbouring countries. A US-Bahrain Hormuz draft was circulated on 7 May. (UN News)
- **GA AI track:** 78/265 (2024, US-led, on safe and trustworthy AI); 78/311 (2024, China-led, on capacity building); 79/325 (26 August 2025, adopted without a vote), which created a 40-member Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance. Panel members were appointed on 12 February 2026 (vote reported as 117-2-2 in a secondary source). Bengio co-chairs the panel.

- **Global Dialogue:** first met in Geneva on 6–7 July 2026, where the panel presented its preliminary report. The next session is in New York on 3–4 May 2027. (Co-chairs' summary)

Not checked

I couldn't open the text of S/2026/818, Security Council Report's October forecast or its What's in Blue preview from here. The briefers list and any change of time should come in tonight's Spokesperson notice.