

Statement to be delivered by Guyana at the 26th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority

Mr. President,

Guyana is honoured to participate in this 26th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority. My delegation congratulates you on your election as President of the 26th Assembly and applauds your stewardship of the Assembly during these unprecedented times. We also extend congratulations to the Secretary-General, H.E. Michael W. Lodge on his re-election to the post for an additional term and assure him of the support of the Government of Guyana for the work of the Authority. We commend him for his informative and thorough report, which provides an update *inter alia*, on the Strategic Plan of the Authority for the period 2019-2023.

At the outset, Guyana aligns itself with the statement delivered by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) in response to the President's report.

Mr. President, the core mandate of the Authority regarding the exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources of the Area, environmental protection and capacity building in marine scientific technologies and the management of marine ecosystems and marine protected areas remain critical to the overall wellbeing of Coastal States. Guyana, therefore, acknowledges the crucial role of the Authority in developing policies for the effective management of the Area and its resources for the benefit of all mankind and future generations. Equally laudable is the support of the Authority for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which is evidenced by the adoption of the decision relating to the action plan of the Authority as embodied in document ISBA/26/A/17.

On the question of the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits, Guyana notes the need for clear policy guidance from the Assembly, which the Finance Committee requires to continue the development of rules, regulations, and procedures for equitable benefit sharing, in accordance with the provisions of UNCLOS.

The development of these rules, regulations and procedures, may influence the discussions currently underway on the conclusion of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation, and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The BBNJ discussions are at a critical juncture. The more than 61% of the oceans that are beyond areas of national jurisdiction are also threatened by climate change, overexploitation, pollution, habitat loss, and other pressures as well as their cumulative impacts. The need for effective governance of this area cannot therefore be overstated.

Mr. President, Guyana remains conscious of the adverse effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had globally. Particularly, Guyana notes that the pandemic has impeded the adoption of the exploitation regulations along with the guidelines and standards required for its implementation. However, Guyana is satisfied with the 'revised' 2022 roadmap considered during the meetings of the Council for the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.

As one of the many women active in the area, I take pride in congratulating the Authority on behalf of the Government of Guyana, for taking steps towards organising the Conference on Women in the Law of the Sea. Indeed, initiatives like the Conference and the requirement for contractors to place a particular focus on recruiting women for training, contributes to the attainment of SDG 5 relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Authority's commitment to meaningful and informed engagement with all stakeholders is commendable and only paralleled by its desire to facilitate the effective participation and inclusion of States, including least

developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in the implementation of its programme.

Mr. President, the principles and objectives of the International Seabed Authority continue to be fully endorsed by Guyana. Our revised Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) embodies the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 14, to conserve and sustainably use our marine resources. Guyana's LCDS will support marine and coastal ecosystems' protection and low-carbon development. By way of implementing this development trajectory of the Government of Guyana, the Government approved a Maritime Economy Plan for Guyana, prepared with assistance from the British Government with the aim of the sustainable development of our ocean resources. The Plan is currently in its implementation phase and will buttress the creation of a marine spatial plan for Guyana and the safeguards established to protect our marine environment, including by the conduct of environmental impact assessments to examine potential risks to marine life and coastal livelihoods, from the offshore activities being conducted in Guyana's maritime zones.

Mr. President, Guyana will continue to be guided by the work of the Authority, particularly as it relates to the fulfilment of its mandate to create that delicate balance of managing resource exploitation with the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to assure you of the full commitment of Guyana to the realization of the mandate and aspirations of the Authority.

I thank you.