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Other matters

Capacity development strategy of the International Seabed Authority

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. As recognized in its strategic plan for the period 2019–2023,¹ the International Seabed Authority has the duty to design and implement mechanisms to build capacity for developing States, in accordance with its mandate under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982. Such mechanisms should promote and encourage the transfer of technology to developing States² and expand opportunities for participation in activities in the Area.³ A challenge for the Authority is to develop mechanisms, including capacity-building programmes, that ensure the fully integrated participation of developing States in activities in the Area at all levels. Strategic direction 5 (Build capacity for developing States) and strategic direction 6 (Ensure fully integrated participation by developing States) are aimed at accomplishing this objective.

2. Since 2020, several actions have been taken to operationalize these requirements. A detailed review and analysis of these actions was presented to the Assembly at the twenty-sixth session.⁴ This enabled the members of the Authority to identify the core elements of a dedicated strategy for capacity development based on a report of the Secretary-General.⁵ Also at its twenty-sixth session, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to develop and implement a dedicated strategy for capacity development for consideration at the twenty-seventh session.⁶

* [ISBA/27/A/L.1](#).

¹ See [ISBA/24/A/10](#), annex.

² See United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, arts. 144, 273 and 274.

³ *Ibid.*, art. 148.

⁴ [ISBA/26/A/7](#).

⁵ [ISBA/26/A/12](#).

⁶ See [ISBA/26/A/18](#), para. 2.



3. A draft capacity development strategy was circulated for public consultation during the period from 25 April to 27 May 2022. A total of 16 submissions were received. The largest number of submissions came from members of the Authority (10),⁷ followed by intergovernmental organizations (4)⁸ and contractors (2).⁹

4. The secretariat has revised the draft capacity development strategy, taking into account the suggestions and comments submitted during the consultation. The draft strategy, as revised, is submitted for adoption by the Assembly and is contained in annex I. A draft decision is set out in annex II of the present document.

II. Overview of the comments received

5. The majority of comments received welcomed the development of the draft strategy in line with the commitment of the Authority to deliver capacity development programmes based on the specific needs identified by members of the Authority. Further, the majority of comments submitted were in support of the objectives of the strategy as identified in the strategic plan and high-level action plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023, as well as the key result areas identified.

6. Some commentators noted that, pursuant to the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the benefits to be derived from activities in the Area that have to be shared equitably include specific programmes aimed at strengthening the capacities of developing States and technologically less developed States, as well as programmes designed to promote the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area. This specifically refers to the provision of technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes in marine science and technology and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. It was also noted that dedicated mechanisms had been developed and established to support the participation of developing States in the work of the Authority, including voluntary trust funds to enable nationals of developing States to participate directly in the work of the different relevant organs of the Authority.

7. No strict timeline has been assigned in the strategy, with the understanding that the necessary time frame within which programmes, projects and activities are implemented is aligned with the time frame of the strategic plan and high-level action plan or each specific project framework. In any case, progress will continue to be reported annually to the Assembly through the report presented by the Secretary-General under article 166 (4) of the Convention.

8. Implementation of the strategy will be supported by a road map identifying the main categories of needs identified by country and by region, with a view to informing the adjustment and, when necessary, design and implementation of dedicated programmes, projects and activities to address such needs. This will further be complemented by the identification of performance indicators to assess the benefits of programmes, projects and activities over the medium and long term at the individual, institutional and national levels.

9. The programmes, projects and activities implemented are led by the identification of needs undertaken by developing States members of the Authority. Although some commentators proposed to review and renew all priority capacity development needs identified by developing States members of the Authority every three years, five years seems to be the most realistic time frame for undertaking such assessments in the light of the efforts required.

⁷ Argentina, China, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mongolia, Morocco, Norway, Portugal and Russian Federation.

⁸ Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, International Atomic Energy Agency, Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and United Nations Environment Programme.

⁹ China Minmetals Corporation and Global Sea Mineral Resources NV.

Annex I

Draft capacity development strategy for the International Seabed Authority

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention, the International Seabed Authority is mandated to organize and control activities in the Area on behalf of humankind as a whole, while taking the measures necessary to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from such activities. All activities in the Area must be carried out for the benefit of humankind as a whole, taking into particular consideration the interests and needs of developing States. The Authority must provide for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area. Such benefits include specific programmes aimed at strengthening the capacities of developing States and technologically less developed States, as well as programmes designed to promote the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area, including through technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes in marine science and technology and the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

2. The duty of the Authority to develop and implement mechanisms to build capacity for developing States, in accordance with its mandate under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, is recognized in the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023.¹ Such mechanisms should be aimed at promoting and encouraging the transfer of technology to developing States² and expanding opportunities for participation in activities in the Area.³ Members of the Authority have identified that a key challenge lies in the development of mechanisms, including capacity-building programmes, that ensure the fully integrated participation of developing States in activities in the Area at all levels. Strategic direction 5 (Build capacity for developing States) and strategic direction 6 (Ensure fully integrated participation by developing States) are aimed at accomplishing this objective.

3. Capacity-building and training have been an integral feature of the Authority's activities since its establishment. Since 2000, various programmes and initiatives have been developed and implemented by the Authority to strengthen the capacities of developing States and technologically less developed States. In general, most of them have been successful, as they created the enabling conditions to build the capacities of many individuals while strengthening institutional capacities.⁴ A recent review of the contribution of the Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development found that the work of the Authority on capacity development and institutional strengthening contributed to Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 14 (life below water), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals).⁵ Interviews with former trainees of the Authority highlighted the direct and impactful contribution of

¹ See ISBA/24/A/10, annex.

² See Convention, arts. 144, 273 and 274.

³ Ibid, art. 148.

⁴ See ISBA/26/A/2, ISBA/26/A/2/Add.1 and ISBA/26/A/7.

⁵ See International Seabed Authority, "The contribution of the International Seabed Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", 2021. Available at https://isa.org/jm/files/documents/ISA_Contribution_to_the_SDGs_2021.pdf.

the Authority's capacity-building and development programmes in their professional and personal development, as well as in relation to the transfer of knowledge to their institutions.⁶

4. The context within which the Authority is operating is changing rapidly as its regulatory role evolves and as an increasing number of members of the Authority contemplate engaging more actively in its work and in the activities carried out in the Area.⁷ In order to respond to the specific actions identified in the high-level action plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023 to operationalize these strategic objectives,⁸ the secretariat of the Authority, with the assistance of consultants,⁹ commissioned a comprehensive review of all capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by the Authority between 1994 and 2019.¹⁰ The key findings of the review were discussed during a workshop on held in Kingston in February 2020. The workshop was facilitated by the Deputy Director General for Training, Research and Development of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Mathu Joyini. Participants included representatives of members¹¹ and observers¹² of the Authority, experts from international, regional and national organizations,¹³ contractors¹⁴ and national experts.¹⁵ A report on the workshop¹⁶ and a summary of the outcomes¹⁷ are available on the Authority's website.

5. Both the review and the workshop were informed by an advisory committee established by the Secretary-General to provide expert input and strategic advice to the secretariat.¹⁸ The draft of the review was further revised in the light of comments from the advisory committee, the training subgroup of the Legal and Technical Commission, and participants in the workshop, and input received from Colombia, Cuba, Norway, Peru and the Philippines during a public consultation held between

⁶ Ibid, pp. 35 and 42.

⁷ See [ISBA/26/A/7](#), para. 24.

⁸ See [ISBA/25/A/15](#) and [ISBA/25/A/15/Corr.1](#), annex II.

⁹ The consultants were Rahul Sharma, former Chief Scientist of the National Institute of Oceanography (India), and Tearinaki Tanielu, Director of the Multilateral Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Kiribati.

¹⁰ See [ISBA/26/A/7](#).

¹¹ Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, European Union, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Myanmar, Nauru, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago and Uganda.

¹² Ethiopia, Centre for Borders Research of Durham University, Interridge and Pew Charitable Trusts.

¹³ African Union; Commonwealth; Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; National Deep Sea Centre (Joint Training and Research Centre); National Oceanography Centre; Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Children's Fund; and World Maritime University.

¹⁴ China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association; Deep Ocean Resources Development Company Limited; Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources; Global Sea Mineral Resources NV; Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation; Nauru Ocean Resources Incorporated; Tonga Offshore Mining Limited; and UK Seabed Resources Limited.

¹⁵ From Ghana, India, Kiribati and Togo.

¹⁶ [ISBA/26/A/7](#).

¹⁷ [ISBA/26/A/12](#).

¹⁸ The list of members of the advisory committee is provided in International Seabed Authority, "Review of capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by the International Seabed Authority 1994–2019", July 2020, annex 1.

April and June 2020.¹⁹ All these elements were presented to the Assembly in a comprehensive report,²⁰ which led to the adoption of the decision referred to in paragraph 6 below. An important element of that decision was the development of strategic partnerships with existing national and regional institutions to strengthen international cooperation for capacity development and the establishment of a network of national focal points for capacity development to better facilitate interactions between member States and the secretariat.²¹

6. In December 2020, the Assembly adopted a decision on a programmatic approach to capacity development in which it requested the Secretary-General to develop and implement a dedicated strategy for capacity development, taking into account the core elements identified in a report presented to the Assembly in August 2020.²² The present document responds to that request and sets out the core elements of a capacity development strategy.

II. Objectives of the strategy

7. Capacity development is fundamental to ensure the effective participation of developing States in activities carried out in the Area and in the work of the Authority. The Authority recognizes that capacity development can be grouped into three mutually reinforcing and interdependent levels: individual development, institutional development and development that results from the enabling environment at the national level. The first level is about increasing the skills and abilities of individuals, while the second focuses on increasing the capabilities of institutions of members in fields relevant to the work of the Authority, with a view to enabling them to fulfil their mandates and responsibilities. The third involves improvements in policy and regulatory frameworks in support of effective implementation of the legal regime of the Area as well as in relation to inter-institutional coordination.

8. The Authority defines capacity development as “the process through which individual, organization and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time”.²³ It is about creating and building capacities and their use, management and retention. This approach is based on the fact that there are some capacities that already exist. In other words, the concept of “capacity development” uses the existing base of capacities as its starting point and then supports efforts to enhance and retain them. Because the building of individual skills and institutional strengthening may take time, capacity development needs to be seen as a long-term process.²⁴

9. The objective of the present strategy is to enhance the ability of the Authority to build and develop the capacity of developing States members of the Authority (strategic direction 5 of the strategic plan), with a view to ensuring the full integrated

¹⁹ Colombia and Peru are observers to the Authority.

²⁰ [ISBA/26/A/7](#).

²¹ As of April 2022, 50 member States had nominated a national focal point for capacity development.

²² See [ISBA/26/A/18](#), para. 2.

²³ See United Nations Development Programme, “Capacity development: practice note”, 2008, sect. I.3. This definition is largely consistent with the broadly accepted concept defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Development Assistance Committee, 2006); see also International Seabed Authority, “Review of capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by the International Seabed Authority 1994–2019”, p. 13.

²⁴ International Seabed Authority, “Review of capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by the International Seabed Authority 1994–2019”, p. 13.

participation of these States in the work of the Authority and the activities carried out in the Area (strategic direction 6).

III. Key result areas

10. The key elements of the strategy cover five interrelated result areas, as shown below.

Key result area 1: ensuring that capacity development programmes and activities are meaningful, tangible, efficient, effective and targeted at the needs of developing States as identified by them

Facilitating the identification and regular review of the needs and priorities of developing States members of the Authority

11. Effective capacity development programmes and activities must reflect an understanding of the recipients' needs and priorities, as identified by those recipients. The process of review and consultation carried out in 2019 and 2020 referred to in paragraph 5 above has enabled the Authority to align its current programmes, activities and available resources with the needs identified, such as those related to policy and legal frameworks, and to science and technology capacities for resource assessment, environmental management and offshore engineering.²⁵ A review of the actual needs of developing States members of the Authority shall be undertaken at least every five years to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the work undertaken.

12. Attention will also be given to developing programmes, projects and activities that recognize the different levels of intervention (individual, institutional and national) required and the difference in priority needs identified. For instance, specific consideration will be given to the needs identified by developing States sponsoring activities in the Area or those which intend to sponsor future activities in the Area. Due consideration will also be given to the specific needs identified by countries through the 2020 survey, as well as specific needs identified at the regional level and to address the unique challenges faced by least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. This differentiated capacity development strategy will result in activities that are more meaningful for and better targeted at individual member States.

13. Ensuring ongoing adjustment in the activities implemented by the Authority in accordance with the needs identified by developing States will also build on feedback received from the network of national focal points for capacity development, as well as feedback received from the recipients of each capacity development programme.

Output 1.a. All capacity development programmes and initiatives aligned with and address the needs of developing States as identified by them, with the specific needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States taken into account by the Authority when conceptualizing, developing and implementing relevant capacity development programmes and initiatives

Output 1.b. Priority needs assessment of members of the Authority kept under ongoing review, including through updates and feedback received from the network of national focal points for capacity development, with an overall review undertaken at least every five years

²⁵ See International Seabed Authority, "National capacity development priorities identified by Members of the International Seabed Authority in 2021", Policy Brief 01/2021. Available at https://isa.org.jm/files/files/documents/Capacity_Development_Policy_Brief_01-2021_rev2.pdf.

Improving inclusion of capacity development components in all programmatic activities of the Authority, where appropriate and feasible

14. Capacity development is a core component of the strategic framework of the Authority, which is made up of the strategic plan, the high-level action plan and the action plan in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. This is intended to facilitate the design, conceptualization, implementation and reporting of dedicated capacity development activities across the wide range of work undertaken by the Authority to fulfil its responsibilities in the four main categories of its mandate, namely: (a) managing exploration and exploitation activities in the Area, (b) ensuring the protection of the marine environment and biodiversity, (c) promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the Area and (d) ensuring the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits from activities in the Area.

15. Accordingly, where required and feasible, the secretariat will endeavour to design and implement capacity development activities that address the needs identified by developing States members of the Authority in one or more of the four main categories of the Authority's mandate (see para. 14 above).

Output 1.c. Programmatic activities designed and implemented by the Authority that respond, where appropriate and possible, to the needs identified by developing States members of the Authority in one or more main categories of its mandate under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement

Key result area 2: establishing and furthering strategic partnerships in support of capacity development

Fostering strategic partnerships to enhance the impact of capacity development programmes and initiatives

16. Success in implementing the programmatic approach for capacity development lies in the ability to foster strategic and transformative partnerships. This will be particularly relevant in relation to articles 143 and 273 of the Convention and the requirements for States parties to cooperate with competent international organizations and the Authority to encourage and facilitate the transfer to developing States, their nationals and the Enterprise²⁶ of skills and sustainable marine technology with regard to activities in the Area.

17. Three complementary levels of actions will be taken. First, the secretariat will seek to leverage existing memorandums of understanding and cooperation agreements with other competent intergovernmental and regional organizations to develop joint capacity development projects and activities. Second, the Authority will continue to identify additional organizations with which such cooperation could be established. Third, the Authority is also committed to deepening its partnerships with United Nations entities, other intergovernmental organizations and relevant subregional and regional organizations to jointly implement capacity development activities targeted at their respective members. In any case, the objective of the strategic partnerships is to leverage the respective comparative advantages of the entities involved while creating synergies and avoiding duplication in mandates and programmes. Particular attention will be given to South-South and triangular cooperation in line with the 2030 Agenda.

²⁶ Pursuant to the Convention (art. 170), the Enterprise can carry out activities in the Area. It is the commercial arm of the Authority. See also Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, annex, sect. 2, paras. 1 and 2.

18. At the subregional and regional level, particular emphasis will be placed on organizations and entities that have prioritized South-South and triangular cooperation, with a view to supporting exchanges of expertise between countries within and in different regions, taking into account the needs identified by developing States members of the Authority. The feedback provided by the network of national focal points for capacity development on relevant regional or national institutions will enable actor mapping to identify a list of competent institutions with which the secretariat will cooperate in the design and implementation of capacity development projects and activities.

Output 2.a. Strategic partnerships with competent international and regional organizations fostered and developed to ensure synergies and avoid duplication in the delivery of capacity development programmes and activities

Output 2.b. Relevant regional and national institutions identified and contacted to support the design and implementation of capacity development projects and activities by the Authority

Enhancing regional and national ownership through the establishment of national and regional training and research centres

19. Pursuant to the Convention, States, directly or through competent international organizations and the Authority, have the duty to promote and facilitate the establishment and strengthening of national marine scientific and technological research centres in order to stimulate and advance the conduct of marine scientific research by developing States and to enhance their national capabilities to utilize and preserve their marine resources for their economic benefit.²⁷ Such national centres should provide for advanced training facilities and necessary equipment, skills and know-how, as well as technical experts, for the States that may need and request such assistance.²⁸ The Convention also envisages the establishment of regional marine scientific and technological centres, in particular in developing States. This provision is attached to the duty of States, in coordination with the competent international organizations, the Authority and national marine scientific and technological research institutions, to promote such initiatives. The main objective is to “stimulate and advance the conduct of marine scientific research by developing States and foster the transfer of marine technology”.²⁹ The functions of such regional centres shall include: (a) training and educational programmes on various aspects of marine scientific and technological research, in particular marine biology, including conservation and management of living resources, oceanography, hydrography, engineering, geological exploration of the seabed, mining and offshore technologies; (b) management studies; (c) study programmes related to the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the prevention, reduction and control of pollution; (d) organization of regional conferences, seminars and symposiums; (e) acquisition and processing of marine scientific and technological data and information; (f) prompt dissemination of results of marine scientific and technological research in readily available publications; (g) publicizing of national policies with regard to the transfer of marine technology and systematic comparative study of those policies; (h) compilation and systematization of information on the marketing of technology and on contracts and other arrangements concerning patents; and (i) technical cooperation with other States of the region.³⁰

²⁷ See Convention, art. 275.

²⁸ Ibid., art. 275 (2).

²⁹ Ibid., art. 276 (1).

³⁰ Ibid., art. 277.

20. The Authority will continue its dialogue with member States and interested organizations to develop a network of regional and national training and research centres which could support the Authority in delivering its capacity development mandate and develop tailor-made programmes to target the specific needs identified by developing States, including at the regional level. Attention will be given to facilitating the sharing of training and research materials and, where possible, translating them into local languages, as well as promoting regional and interregional collaboration through the development of scientific communities and communities of practice.

21. Where appropriate, instead of establishing new regional centres in each region, the Authority will consider establishing strategic partnerships with existing national and regional institutions, with a view to creating a platform to strengthen international cooperation for capacity development and transfer of marine science technology. In so doing, the Authority will assess the possibility of utilizing existing national or regional institutions. This is expected to ensure ownership and to contribute to improving regional and national capacity and capability in a sustainable manner that reflects the needs assessments of developing States, especially least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The design and structure of the arrangements between the Authority and national or regional institutions will be based on long-term objectives according to the needs of members and/or the needs identified at the regional level. Such design and structure will also identify opportunities to ensure long-term training mechanisms and sustainable funding, including by exploring arrangements necessary for co-funding and resource mobilization.

Output 2.c. National and regional training and research centres established, where relevant, to respond to the needs of developing States members of the Authority, especially least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

Output 2.d. A network of national and regional training and research centres with complementary scope of work and actions established to support the capacity development mandate of the Authority

Stimulating innovative approaches to capacity development in support of continuous professional development

22. The Authority is committed to adapting the way it delivers capacity development to fit the increasing needs of its members in an evolving context. To this end, the secretariat will continue to welcome suggestions from the members of the Authority and promote, when and where possible, agile approaches to developing the capacities of its members and enhancing collaborative capacity development across the three levels of interventions (individual, institutional and national) and the different stakeholders involved, including government representatives, scientific communities, early career professionals, contractors and members of academia. This will be reflected in the different types of tools and methodologies used.

23. If national and regional workshops continue to be considered as an important avenue to develop capacity, consideration will also be given to developing further secondment opportunities with the secretariat of the Authority and with other competent international organizations. Attention will also be given to ensuring that practical training offered by contractors under the terms of their contracts signed with the Authority provides the conditions for effective at-sea training and access to laboratories.

24. The Authority will also continue to expand its online training platform with the objective of complementing existing curricula and courses offered by universities and

training institutes. This may include the establishment of “summer schools” or on-demand executive courses focusing on deep sea-related matters in partnership with interested institutions.

Output 2.e. Innovative and tailored tools and methodologies developed to support the delivery of capacity development programmes and activities, where relevant and possible

Output 2.f. Opportunities for secondments of national experts to the secretariat of the Authority strengthened and expanded

Output 2.g. Content and interface of the Authority’s e-learning platform consolidated and further expanded, with a view to complementing existing or new curricula provided by universities and training institutions

Output 2.h. Practicability of the organization of “summer schools” or on-demand executive courses on deep sea-related matters explored and, when possible, such initiatives organized in partnership with interested institutions

Key result area 3: strengthening institutional capacities through technology transfer and technical assistance

25. Pursuant to article 143 of the Convention, States parties are required to promote international cooperation in marine scientific research in the Area by ensuring that programmes are developed through the Authority for the benefit of developing States and technologically less developed States with a view to strengthening their research capabilities, training their personnel and the personnel of the Authority in the techniques and applications of research and fostering the employment of qualified personnel in research in the Area. Furthermore, article 144 of the Convention, as implemented through the 1994 Agreement, requires the Authority to take measures to acquire technology and scientific knowledge relating to activities in the Area and promote and encourage the transfer to developing States of such technology and scientific knowledge so that all States parties benefit therefrom. Under the 1994 Agreement, this is to be achieved in particular by developing training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes in marine science and technology and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. This could be done by leveraging specific actions in three complementary levels pertaining to (a) developing human resources, (b) facilitating access to physical infrastructure and (c) leveraging the necessary financial resources.

Developing human resources to ensure ownership of expertise and knowledge

26. Developing human resources and experts is a priority which serves as a foundation of the capacity development mandate of the Authority. This requires not only that dedicated programmes, projects and activities be developed for specific target groups, such as government officials, researchers, technical staff, managers and students, but also that investments be made to maintain a sufficient critical mass of such experts and prevent brain drain. Different approaches will be considered but emphasis will be placed on developing dedicated curricula for higher education programmes and executive courses on deep sea-related issues in partnership with members and relevant national and regional institutions. Some consideration will also be given to conducting training of trainers to ensure further expansion of knowledge acquired at the national and regional levels.

27. The secretariat will continue to place emphasis on the successful and meaningful implementation of the contractors' training programme,³¹ the internship programme³² and the junior professional officer programme,³³ with a view to ensuring, where possible, equal participation for qualified women and men from developing States, in particular from least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The secretariat will also strengthen its efforts to secure and maintain support for the recognition of excellence of young researchers through the Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research, which covers all types of deep sea research.

28. Attention will also be given to facilitating the identification of trained experts at the regional and national levels, including by continuing to report annually to members of the Authority, through identified focal points of the Authority and the network of national focal points for capacity development, the list of individuals who have benefited from any programmes, projects or activities implemented under its control. Further, an alumni network of former trainees will be established with a view to monitoring the midterm and long-term impact of training provided and enabling the secretariat to use the expertise of former trainees, where possible, as mentors, experts or consultants.

Output 3.a. Dedicated capacity development programmes and activities developed and implemented by the Authority with due consideration for specific target groups

Output 3.b. A tailored curriculum for higher education programmes or executive courses on deep sea-related matters established in partnership with members and relevant national and regional organizations

Output 3.c. Members of the Authority regularly informed about their nationals who have benefited from capacity development programmes and activities implemented by the Authority

Output 3.d. An alumni network of former trainees of the Authority established

Facilitating access to physical and digital infrastructure

29. Access to deep-sea research and observation infrastructure presents a significant challenge for many members of the Authority, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in part due to the costs of acquisition, operation and maintenance. The Authority is not in a position to finance large physical infrastructure such as research vessels, laboratories, buildings and machinery. Nevertheless, consideration could be given to the development of dedicated programmes, projects and activities that will enhance access to such infrastructure through external sponsorship, in-kind donations and partnerships with interested member States, contractors, research institutions and development partners.

Output 3.e. Dedicated initiatives and partnerships, established in close cooperation with members, research institutions and contractors to facilitate access by developing States, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, to physical research, digital databases and observation infrastructure, developed

³¹ See www.isa.org.jm/training/contractor-training.

³² See www.isa.org.jm/training/internships.

³³ See www.isa.org.jm/career-opportunities/junior-professional-programmes.

Key result area 4: advancing women’s empowerment and leadership in deep sea-related disciplines through targeted capacity development activities

Opening up new opportunities for women in deep sea-related disciplines, in particular in non-traditional and emerging sectors

30. Science, technology and innovation are fundamental to addressing global challenges such as poverty eradication, economic and social development and the protection of the environment. They are also critical to the achievement of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to ensuring that developing countries fully benefit from the sustainable and inclusive ocean economy. The vital role of women in contributing to such global objectives has been well established and repeatedly reaffirmed by Governments and at major United Nations conferences and meetings. The linkages between this fact and the empowerment of women have also been reaffirmed over the years through a series of normative and policy commitments, including in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, adopted at the World Education Forum (2000), the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, adopted at the World Summit on the Information Society (2005), the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work, adopted at its fifty-fifth session (2011), and General Assembly resolutions [68/220](#) on science, technology and innovation for development (2013) and [70/212](#) on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (2015).

31. Since 2017, the Authority has implemented a series of initiatives to support its commitment to advancing women’s empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research. The secretariat will continue to ensure that dedicated activities are put in place to support the participation of women in non-traditional and emerging sectors such as deep sea-related disciplines, including technology, engineering, taxonomy and the blue economy. This will be achieved by furthering and developing strategic partnerships with members, contractors and relevant intergovernmental and regional organizations, including the scientific community and academia.

32. In parallel, the secretariat will strengthen its action in partnership with other competent international and regional organizations and the network of national focal points for capacity development in furthering the recognition of the role and participation of women experts in the development of the law of the sea.

33. A mentoring programme will be established with a view to providing a platform for young women scientists to interact with experienced scientists. Dialogue is ongoing with a number of world-renowned scientists and experts, and a call for participation will be launched every year.

Output 4.a. Dedicated activities and initiatives implemented by the Authority to continue advancing women’s empowerment and leadership in deep sea-related disciplines

Output 4.b. The role and participation of women experts in the development of the law of the sea improved through the organization of a dedicated event every year, where possible, involving experts from different backgrounds and experience, with a focus on women experts from least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

Output 4.c. A mentoring programme for women scientists established, maintained and evaluated for impact by the Authority

Creating the enabling conditions for the active participation of women in at-sea training through the development of mechanisms aimed at achieving gender equality

34. Working in close collaboration with contractors, the secretariat will strengthen its efforts to create the enabling conditions to allow for the active participation of women in training opportunities on at-sea vessels, in particular women from least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. This will be achieved by increasing the number of contractors pledging to allocate 50 per cent of training opportunities to qualified female candidates and developing an operational framework for ensuring their safe and active participation in exploration cruises. The secretariat acknowledges the important role of its members in ensuring that women experts have equal access and opportunities to participate in the Authority's capacity development programmes.

Output 4.d. The number of contractors pledging to allocate 50 per cent of their annual training opportunities to qualified women increased

Output 4.e. An operational framework for enabling the safe and active participation of women in exploration cruises developed and implemented

Key result area 5: improving deep-sea literacy through better awareness and understanding of the legal regime of the Area and the role and mandate of the Authority

Improving global deep-sea literacy

35. Improving public understanding of the deep sea and the legal regime in place is paramount. Accordingly, the secretariat, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, will develop and implement a series of activities focusing on raising awareness of the work currently undertaken by the international community, through the Authority, to advance understanding of the deep seabed and to regulate human activities with respect to important resource potentials and to ensure adequate protection of the marine environment. The specific and unique mandate assigned to the Authority by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement in relation to the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research, and the coordination of research results when available, will also be a key axis of the work undertaken by the Authority. This will essentially be done through tailored activities aimed at contributing to increasing the strategic visibility of the action plan in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the programmatic elements implemented to operationalize the six strategic research priorities endorsed by the Assembly of the Authority in December 2020.

Output 5.a. Awareness and understanding of the general public of the deep sea (resource potential of seabed minerals, geology, biodiversity, ecosystems and exploration activities, among others), as well as the legal framework in place to regulate and organize access to and management of seabed mineral resources in the Area, improved

Output 5.b. Awareness and understanding of the general public of the specific and unique mandate of the Authority in relation to marine scientific research in the Area, as well as the programmatic activities implemented under the action plan in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, increased

Raising awareness of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement in support of national development objectives

36. Since 2007, the organization of national and regional information seminars has been an important tool through which the Authority has been able to clarify the work it carries out in compliance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.³⁴ Organized upon the request of a member State or a group of member States, such seminars have also significantly contributed to raising awareness of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement to encourage universal participation through increased ratification. The secretariat works closely with interested member States in the planning and organization of such events. The plan is to hold one information seminar each year.

Output 5.c. General awareness and understanding of the legal regime of the Area and the role and mandate of the Authority increased

Output 5.d. Information seminars regularly organized to support awareness-raising efforts regarding the legal regime of the Area and the role and mandate of the Authority

Promoting the development of communications programmes and outreach on deep sea-related matters in relevant institutions

37. Over 40 years of deep-sea exploration funded by Governments and State research entities have generated most of the data and information available on the deep sea and its ecosystems, which have great value not only in informing the decision-making processes of the Authority, but also to society at large. Ensuring awareness and visibility of such research as a fundamental support of the work of the Authority and its contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including its role in building and developing capacity, is essential. Attention will therefore be given to developing tailored communication products and information materials for raising the awareness of the general public, policymakers and decision makers about the role and mandate of the Authority and the value of the research and knowledge generated through exploration of the Area.

Output 5.e. The ongoing development of communications products and information campaigns on deep sea-related matters ensured

Output 5.f. A compendium of the work of exploration contractors in support of improved understanding and visibility of the research undertaken in the Area and the data and information generated through it published annually

IV. Resources

38. The success of the present strategy rests on the ability of the Authority to leverage the resources necessary for its implementation. In 2021, for the first time, the Council and the Assembly of the Authority approved the allocation of a dedicated budget for capacity development activities, which, however, remains insufficient to address all the priority needs identified by developing States members of the Authority.³⁵ Since 2017, the efforts made by the secretariat have led to a significant increase in extrabudgetary contributions from several partners, which nonetheless remain too limited to respond to the magnitude of needs identified.

³⁴ See International Seabed Authority, "Review of capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by the International Seabed Authority 1994–2019," p. 45.

³⁵ See [ISBA/26/A/5/Add.1/Rev.2-ISBA/26/C/18/Add.1/Rev.2](#).

39. The Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area was established in 2006 with the objective of promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole, in particular by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes and by providing them with opportunities to participate in international technical and scientific cooperation, including through training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. Nevertheless, several elements have hindered the full efficiency of the Fund and, in its decision in document [ISBA/26/A/18](#), the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take those factors into account in conducting a review of the terms of reference of the Fund.

40. In line with the request of the Assembly, the Secretary-General has undertaken a review of the Fund and submitted proposals for the consideration of the Finance Committee.³⁶ It is proposed to establish a partnership fund, as a multi-donor trust fund, to provide a transparent mechanism through which donors can support the implementation of strategic programmatic priorities.³⁷ The current objectives of the Endowment Fund, which are fully compatible with the action plan in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, would be subsumed under the partnership fund, and an annual drawdown from the Endowment Fund would be used to support relevant activities. This would provide a greater incentive for donors to invest in the Authority and the outputs identified under the relevant policy framework.

41. In addition, the secretariat has undertaken to develop a resource mobilization strategy and action plan with elements dedicated specifically to capacity development to respond to this situation, and will continue to dialogue with interested partners to ensure that the necessary support can be provided to support its capacity development mandate.

42. In the meantime, it would be essential for members of the Authority to ensure continued financial support to the regular budget of the Authority. In line with the decisions of the Assembly in [ISBA/25/A/16](#) and [ISBA/26/A/18](#), further consideration could also be given to engaging in discussions with observer States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations with observer status with the Authority and other non-traditional donors to identify how they intend to contribute to the capacity development programmes and activities implemented by the Authority.

V. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

43. The impact of the present strategy and the activities implemented under it will be measured through clear indicators and targets designed to assess the benefits generated by their delivery. As more in-depth work is undertaken by the secretariat to design the indicators, the focus will be on assessing the benefits of the capacity development programme, projects and activities of the Authority at the individual, institutional and national, as well as economic, societal and environmental, levels.³⁸ In that context, due consideration is being given to developing the mechanisms

³⁶ See [ISBA/27/FC/3](#).

³⁷ Strategic plan and high-level action plan for 2019–2023 and action plan in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

³⁸ See International Seabed Authority, “*Review of capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by the International Seabed Authority 1994-2019*”, p. 49.

necessary to ensure the monitoring and assessment of the long-term benefits of training programmes, including post-training surveys and reporting.

VI. Implementation

44. The implementation of the present strategy will be undertaken by the secretariat of the Authority. Programmatic capacity development workplans and progress will be reported annually to the Assembly.

Annex II

Draft decision of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority relating to the implementation of a programmatic approach to capacity development

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority,

Recalling its decision of 26 July 2018, adopted at its twenty-fourth session,¹ by which it adopted the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023,

Recalling also its decision of 24 July 2019, adopted at its twenty-fifth session,² by which it adopted the high-level action plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023 as well as performance indicators for each of the strategic directions in the strategic plan,

Recalling further its decision of 17 December 2020, adopted at its twenty-sixth session,³ by which it requested the Secretary-General to develop and implement a dedicated strategy for capacity development, taking into account the elements identified in paragraph 36 of his report,⁴ and to report thereon to the Assembly at its twenty-seventh session,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General,⁵ in which he provided the required information on the development of the draft capacity development strategy,

Considering the priorities for capacity development identified by the members of the Authority,

Committed to further building the capacity of developing States, in particular geographically disadvantaged States, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as ensuring their fully integrated participation in the activities undertaken in the Area,

Emphasizing the importance of a dedicated strategy for capacity development that addresses the needs identified by the members of the Authority,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;⁶
2. *Welcomes* the nomination by members of the Authority of national focal points in charge of liaising with the secretariat on matters relating to capacity development, taking into account the terms of reference for such focal points as set out in the annex to the decision of the Assembly of 17 December 2020;⁷
3. *Adopts* the capacity development strategy of the International Seabed Authority, as contained in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General,⁸ which provides the necessary framework for the implementation of a programmatic approach to capacity development;
4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to implement the strategy and progress the identification of key indicators to monitor progress;

¹ ISBA/24/A/10.

² ISBA/25/A/15 and ISBA/25/A/15/Corr.1.

³ ISBA/26/A/18.

⁴ ISBA/26/A/7.

⁵ ISBA/27/A/5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ISBA/26/A/18.

⁸ ISBA/27/A/5.

5. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to explore options to mobilize additional resources to provide the necessary financial support for the implementation of the strategy;

6. *Encourages* members of the Authority to participate fully in the implementation of the strategy, including through the development of programmes, projects and activities in the four main categories of the mandate of the Authority;

7. *Invites* contractors, the private sector, civil society, academia and foundations to contribute to the implementation of the strategy in their respective areas of competence, in line with the priorities identified by developing States members of the Authority.
