

STATEMENT BY INDIA

On Item 9 (Dated 14.12.2021)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL, INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY AT ITS 26th SESSION

Mr. President

1. My delegation congratulates the Secretary General for bringing out a very comprehensive report covering various issues. We acknowledge the great amount of work undertaken by the Secretariat and commends the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for adapting to many challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and for continuing to progress the priorities of the Authority.
2. We note with interest that the report of the Secretary-General provides information on the status of the Convention and related legal instruments, the status of contributions to the budget of the Authority and the status of the Area, summary of the outcomes of the previous session of the Authority and a review of the status of implementation of the strategic plan of the Authority for the five-year period 2019–2023. A separate report, entitled “Achieving the sustainable use of deep-sea minerals for the benefit of humankind”, has been issued.
3. India attaches significant importance to the UN Convention on Law of the Sea and the 1994 agreement on Part XI of the Convention by virtue of which the International Seabed Authority was established. The Common Heritage of Mankind has been the underlying principle behind the Convention and the Authority to which India is remains closely associated. It is this principle, Mr. President, that has led to significant expansion of International Seabed Authority over last two decades in almost all spheres. The expanded number of States parties to the Convention to 168 who are also the ipso facto members of the Authority reflects the growing membership of the Authority. Today, we have 31 approved plans of works under the 3 exploration regulations which reflects growing interests in the activities of the Authority. It

is heartening to note that one more State Party Bosnia and Herzegovina became a party to the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS.

4. Indian delegation notes with concern that 53 member states have arrears in the payment of their contributions to the Authority in an amount equal to or exceeding the amount of the contributions due for the proceeding two full years. On the other hand, we note with satisfaction that all contractors had paid the overhead charges for the year 2021.
5. My delegation compliments the efforts of the facilitator Mr. Vladislav Kurbatskiy for his hardwork in trying to reach a consensus on the election of the member of the Legal and Technical Commission. We reiterate our initial position of need of balance between expertise and geographical representation in the Commission.
6. My delegation gives utmost importance to the symbiotic relationship of the Contractors and the Authority. It is our endeavour to ensure that such a relationship is not eroded during the course of negotiating various issues and therefore suggest to strike a delicate balance between various Contractors and Member States including other stake holders that have interest in deep-sea bed and its resources. We need to continue our conversation for maintaining the symbiotic relationship and implement such measures to encourage the contractors to work for the benefit of the Authority. We reiterate our earlier point that the exploitation code should be a balance between the environment and economic and technology development concerns and should safeguard the interests of all stakeholders.
7. It is noteworthy to mention here that the Authority has far-reaching obligations, responsibilities, rules, regulations and procedures to protect the marine environment. The Authority's efforts in implementation of the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019-2023 and carrying out various activities related to various strategic directions in this regard is well appreciated. We noted that the Authority

contributes to 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals out of the 17 SDGs and recently released a report on this issue.

8. Mr. President. My delegation noted with interest the details as provided in the Secretary General's report related to marine scientific research in the Area, and capacity development and training. We are happy to note that International Seabed Authority is in the process of signing a MoU with Indian Ocean Rim Association for cooperation. Between 2020 and 2021, 66 individuals were selected under the contractors' training programme (39 in 2020 and 27 in 2021) which includes 27 women, but due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, many training programmes has been postponed or converted to virtual format. My delegation would like to avail this opportunity to inform distinguished delegates that the much deferred training by India under its contract on polymetallic nodules will start from 17th Jan 2022 for the benefit of 15 candidates chosen by ISA.
9. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman, LTC, Finance Committee and its Members for excellent work, and appreciate the efforts the President of Council who skilfully conducted the proceedings of Council. We would like to congratulate to Dr Kirsty from South Africa for winning the 3rd edition of the Secretary General Award for excellence in deep sea research.
10. India joins other delegations in paying its tribute to late Satya N. Nandan, the first Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, who passed away on 26th February 2020.
11. India stands ready to support the work of the Authority and relevant bodies specifically in relation to the completion relevant regulatory frameworks in a timely fashion. Mr President, I end my intervention with a wish you all for a fruitful deliberations and useful outcome of this 26th session of ISA.

Thank you, Mr. President.