

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador NIU Qingbao,  
Head of Delegation of the People's Republic of China,  
At the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the International Seabed Authority**

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation expresses its condolences and sympathies to France, Germany and Cameroon for the recent terrorist attacks. China has all along firmly opposed and strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We call on all states to join hands in combating terrorism.

At the outset, the Chinese delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this session of the Assembly. We will, as always, support the work of the President and the bureau. We are convinced that under your able guidance, the current session will be crowned with success. We would also like to thank the government and people of Jamaica for their effective assistance and valuable support.

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his annual report. We express overall satisfaction with what we find in the report and our appreciation for the substantial and effective work performed by ISA and its Secretariat. We look forward to further progress in the work of the Authority with the joint effort of all the parties.

Mr. President,

International seabed activities are now in a crucial period with exploration and preparation for exploitation proceeding in parallel. On the one hand, more and more states and entities have submitted applications for the exploration for possible

mining areas. So far, the Authority has approved 28 plans of work for exploration. And applications of the first batch of contractors for an extension of their contracts for exploration for poly-metallic nodules have just been approved. On the other hand, while efforts are being made by all the parties to prepare for exploitation, the continuing slump of the international metals market as a result of the global economic situation means that the possibility of realizing commercial exploitation of deep-sea resources in the near future is quite small. Exploration will continue to be the mainstay of international seabed activities for a considerable period of time to come.

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that a couple of days ago, the Council approved all six applications for extensions of exploration contracts, including the one submitted by COMRA. This is of great significance for bolstering the confidence of the contractors and keeping the forwarding-going momentum and dynamism of the international seabed undertaking. China congratulates the six contractors and commits itself to continuing to fulfill to the letter its responsibilities as a sponsoring state and urging COMRA to honour faithfully its relevant duties and obligations during the contract extension period.

China pays great attention to the formulation of regulations on exploitation under way in the Authority. The exploitation regulations will provide a firm guarantee for realizing the principle of “common heritage of mankind”. The related study and formulation involve such many fields, including mining, finance, environmental protection and laws and represent a complex and difficult undertaking which cannot be accomplished overnight or in great haste. The proposed regulations on exploitation should be in keeping with international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), dovetail with the regulations on exploration that the Authority has formulated, and

take into full consideration the overall interests of the international community and those of the overwhelming majority of the countries, in particular the developing countries. The related criteria should be based on facts and science while a balance should be struck between resource exploitation and environmental protection. We are ready to continue our active participation in this work in a constructive spirit.

Mr. President,

Last year, ISA launched its first periodic review of the international seabed regime. This exercise not only was a comprehensive stocktaking of the work of the Authority for more than 20 years, it also has a bearing on the future direction of the Authority's development. China thanks the Review Committee for its interim report and appreciates its hard work.

China is of the view that since its founding, the Authority has made remarkable progress in rule-setting and institution-building, approving site applications, increasing knowledge and awareness of the deep sea and protecting the environment. This fully proves the overall effectiveness of the existing seabed regime whose basic framework should not be shaken by the review. Based on the premise of the imminent "advent of commercial seabed mining", the interim report recommends setting up new organs such as an Economic Planning Commission and an Inspectorate. Such recommendations show not only over-optimism about the current situation with respect to the international seabed, but also the report's inconsistency with the principle of evolution in the establishment of organs under the Implementing Agreement of UNCLOS. China advocates objectivity in viewing the prospects of seabed exploitation and caution in setting up new organs to avoid creating unnecessary burden for the States Parties. In addition, the periodic review should look at the operation of the international seabed regime. The call for clarification of "the definition of developing States" has evidently overstepped the

terms of reference of the review and should not form part of the recommendations of the report.

Mr. President,

The high seas are closely linked with activities in the Area. At present, the UN General Assembly has started preparation of an international instrument concerning the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. China notes with satisfaction that the International Seabed Authority has actively participated in the process and hopes to see it continue to play an important role in it.

Mr. President,

As an active participant in and contributor to efforts concerning international seabed affairs, China always supports the International Seabed Authority in its work. Last February, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China adopted the Law on the Exploration for and Exploitation of Resources in the Deep Seabed Area, which comprehensively stipulates the rights and obligations for Chinese natural and legal persons or other organizations in their exploration and exploitation activities in the international seabed area. The promulgation of this law will help China better fulfill its responsibilities as a sponsoring state. This law has been filed with the International Seabed Authority for the record.

Last May, China held in Nanjing the Fifth International Symposium on the Continental Shelf and the Area. The Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of ISA and a number of the members of the Legal and Technical Commission attended the symposium at our invitation. The symposium series have played a positive role in facilitating a deeper understanding by all parties about the legal and scientific issues associated to the Area.

While engaged in the international seabed affairs, China, as a developing country, actively supports other developing countries in their participation in international seabed affairs. For many years, China has consistently made contributions to ISA's Voluntary Fund, China made another \$20,000 contribution to the Fund last May in order to support the participation by members from developing countries in meetings of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee.

COMRA, which is sponsored by China as a contractor for exploration in the Area, is diligently fulfilling its obligations as a contractor by actively offering training opportunities to trainees from other developing countries. From 2014 to the end of 2015, the Second Institute of Oceanography of the State Oceanic Administration was entrusted by COMRA to provide training in skills for exploration at sea for polymetallic sulphides as well as theory courses to 6 trainees from Cameroon, Argentina, Thailand, Kiribati, Bangladesh and Georgia, with good results.

Mr. President,

The international seabed is a new frontier for mankind. China is willing to work with all the other parties in continuing to follow the principle of "the common heritage of mankind" and make greater contributions to realizing the sustainable development of international seabed resources and promoting the common interests of mankind.

Thank you, Mr. President.