

Commonwealth Secretariat opening statement to the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA)

Jeff Ardron, 20 July 2016

Mr President and distinguished delegates,

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. It includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries, spanning all ISA regions. Thirty-one of its members are small states, many of them island nations. All members agree to be guided by the 16 principles of the Commonwealth Charter, which include, inter alia, good governance, rule of law, sustainable development, protection of the environment, and the role of civil society.

The Commonwealth Secretariat welcomes the ISA's ongoing efforts to create a sound modern regulatory framework in anticipation of deep-seabed exploitation. Reflecting the interventions of several delegations including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, we see much value in the draft 154 review and encourage the Assembly to give it serious and unbiased consideration. Reflecting Bangladesh and others, we would like to underline the importance of transparency, accountability, and governance effectiveness. This may mean making difficult changes in the immediate future. In the face of change, we would encourage the Authority, and indeed all its Parties, to seek to implement the very best international practices possible. As the representatives from Singapore, Cameroon, and others have already pointed out, all this is in the spirit of fulfilling the promise of the common heritage of humankind. As India and others have highlighted, this will entail the Authority balancing its mandate with this forward-looking principle.

As some of you may know, the Commonwealth Secretariat is under the leadership of a new Secretary General, the Right Honourable Patricia Scotland. These are exciting times for the Commonwealth. We stand by to assist the Authority as it continues to evolve.

Thank you.