



# Assembly

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English only

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**Twenty-eighth session**  
Kingston, 24–28 July 2023

## **Statement by the President on the work of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority at its twenty-eighth session**

1. The twenty-eighth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston, Jamaica, from 24 to 28 July 2023. A total of 10 meetings were held (197th to 206th meetings).

### **I. Adoption of the agenda**

2. At its 197th meeting, on 24 July, the Assembly, considered the provisional agenda and the supplementary list of agenda items for the twenty-eighth session.<sup>1</sup> On 28 July, during its 206th meeting, the Assembly adopted the provisional agenda.<sup>2</sup>
3. The Assembly did not adopt the proposals contained in the supplementary list of agenda items. However, with respect to the proposal of Germany to include an additional item relating to the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to Article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the Convention), the Assembly decided, at its 206th meeting on 28 July, to include this as an item on the agenda for the twenty-ninth session of the Authority in 2024.<sup>3</sup> In the same decision, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include the agenda item when drawing up the provisional agenda pursuant to rule 10(c) of the Rules of Procedure, and requested the Finance Committee to consider the financial and budgetary implications of the proposal and to report to the Assembly during the twenty-ninth session.
4. With respect to the proposal by Chile, France, Costa Rica, Palau and Vanuatu to include an item on the “*Establishment of a general policy by the Assembly related to the conservation of the marine environment, including in consideration of the effects of the ‘two-year rule’*” some delegations raised the incompatibility of this proposal with the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, leading the Assembly to agree that it would be open for the proponents to submit a request pursuant to Rule 10 (e) of the Rules of Procedure to include an item in the provisional agenda for the twenty-ninth session of the Assembly in 2024 with the title “*A general policy of the Authority for the protection and preservation of the marine environment*” .
5. Several delegations noted that the adoption of the provisional agenda and consideration of whether to adopt items contained in a supplementary list were

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<sup>1</sup> See ISBA/28/A/L.1., ISBA/28/A/INF/8 and ISBA/28/A/INF/8/Corr.1

<sup>2</sup> ISBA/28/A/1

<sup>3</sup> ISBA/28/A/16

separate matters and that the Assembly, at this session and in future meetings, should proceed to adopt its provisional agenda separately from items contained in a supplementary list of agenda items, pursuant to its Rules of Procedure and following established practice in other intergovernmental fora.

## **II. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly**

6. At the 197th meeting, following the nomination of the African Group to preside over the Assembly, Ambassador Fanday Turay (Sierra Leone) was elected as President of the Assembly for its twenty-eighth session.
7. The representatives of Belgium (Group of Western European and Other States), Singapore (Group of Asia Pacific) and Trinidad and Tobago (Group of Latin American and Caribbean States) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Assembly for the twenty-eighth session.

## **III. Appointment and report of the Credentials Committee**

8. At its 197th meeting the Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee, consisting of the following members: China, Dominican Republic, Germany, Netherlands, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe.
9. The Credentials Committee met on 26 July and elected Clemens Wackernagel (Germany) as its Chair. The Committee examined the credentials of representatives participating in the twenty-eighth session.
10. At the 203rd meeting, on 27 July, the Chair of the Credentials Committee presented the report of the Committee<sup>4</sup> and same was approved by the Assembly.<sup>5</sup>

## **IV. Consideration of requests for observer status**

11. At the 197th meeting, in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly and the guidelines for observer status of non-governmental organizations with the International Seabed Authority,<sup>6</sup> the Assembly considered and approved eight applications for observer status from the following applicants: China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation,<sup>7</sup> Te Ipukarea Society,<sup>8</sup> Norwegian Forum for Marine Minerals,<sup>9</sup> Arayara International Institute,<sup>10</sup> Minderoo Foundation,<sup>11</sup> Sustainable Ocean Alliance,<sup>12</sup> International Council on Mining and Metals,<sup>13</sup> and Environmental Justice Foundation.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ISBA/28/A/10

<sup>5</sup> ISBA/27/A/13.

<sup>6</sup> ISBA/25/A/16, annex.

<sup>7</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/1.

<sup>8</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/2.

<sup>9</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/3.

<sup>10</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/4.

<sup>11</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/5.

<sup>12</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/6.

<sup>13</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/7.

<sup>14</sup> ISBA/28/A/INF/9

## V. Election to fill a vacancy on the Finance Committee

12. At the 197th meeting of the Assembly, Xing Chaohong (China), Deputy Director-General, Department of Natural Resources and Ecological Environment, Ministry of Finance, was elected to fill the vacant seat on the Committee left by Kejun Fan for the remainder of his term, ending on 31 December 2027.<sup>15</sup>

## VI. Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research

13. During the 198th meeting of the Assembly, on 24 July, the Secretary-General presented the fourth edition of his Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research to Ms. Rima Brown (Cook Islands), a geographer, for her contribution to mapping the seabed of the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority. The Secretary-General expressed appreciation to the Government of Monaco for its continuing contribution in support of the Award since inception.
14. The Delegation of Monaco congratulated Ms Brown and reiterated the continued commitment of the Principality of Monaco to the initiative as well as to a promotion and encouragement of scientific research in the Area in support of the protection and preservation of the marine environment placing emphasis on the advancement of women. The Prime Minister of the Cook Islands also expressed appreciation for the recognition of the efforts undertaken by Ms. Browne and the Cook Islands in adding to scientific knowledge of the seabed. Several other delegations congratulated Ms Browne on receiving the award.

## VII. Annual report of the Secretary-General

15. At the 199th meeting of the Assembly, the Secretary-General presented his annual report submitted in accordance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention comprising an official document<sup>16</sup> and an illustrated publication titled *Just and Equitable Management of the Common Heritage of Humankind*.<sup>17</sup> Under the same agenda item, the Secretary-General also reported on the Implementation of the action plan of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.<sup>18</sup> The Secretary-General opened his presentation by joining his voice to the commemoration of the African Day of Seas and Oceans celebrated every year on 25 July and commending the African States members of the Authority for their ongoing efforts to develop the necessary regulatory frameworks and institutions to fulfil the vision of the Convention in ensuring the sustainable management and protection of the ocean and its resources.
16. During the 199th, 200th, 201st and 202nd meetings, on 25 and 26 July 2023, the Assembly undertook a general debate on the reports of the Secretary-General. One regional group, 53 members of the Authority, as well as 10 observers made

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<sup>15</sup> ISBA/28/A/9

<sup>16</sup> ISBA/28/A/2

<sup>17</sup> Available at [ISA\\_Secretary-General\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2023.pdf](#)

<sup>18</sup> ISBA/28/A/8.

statements, besides one joint statement by Pacific Island States.<sup>19</sup> Statements were also made by heads of States and governments and high-level representatives, namely: the President of Nauru, (Hon. Russ Joseph Kun), the Prime Minister of Cook Islands, (Hon. Mark Brown), the Minister of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, (Hon. Alando Terrelonge), and the Secretary of State for the Sea of France, (Mr. Hervé Berville).

17. Delegations thanked the Government of Jamaica for its hospitality and commitment to the continued work of the Authority. Delegations also thanked the Secretary-General, the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee, the facilitators of the informal working groups of the Council as well as the staff in the Secretariat for their hard work during the year.
18. The majority of delegations commended the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report submitted and noted with appreciation the illustrated publication noting that it provided a very dynamic and detailed overview of the work carried out by the Authority and in particular the extensive efforts of the Secretariat in implementing a wide range of activities to further the mandate of the Authority as well as the strategic directions and associated outputs outlined in the Strategic Plan and the High-Level Action Plan of the Authority for 2019-2023.
19. The majority of delegations further noted with appreciation the extensive work carried out under all nine strategic directions set out by the Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan of the Authority for 2019-2023 to deliver on the high-level actions and related outputs assigned for the reporting period. Several delegations specifically noted that these achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the staff of the Secretariat.
20. Most delegations welcomed the increase in membership of the Authority with the accession of Rwanda to the Convention and 1994 Agreement, and expressed their strong commitment to the integrity of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement as the legal and normative basis for all activities carried out in the Area. Many delegations further stressed that the commitments echoed by Member States during the high-level commemoration organized by the General Assembly in December 2022 to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Convention pointed out its continuing relevance in ensuring the effective and sustainable administration of the Area and its resources as the common heritage of humankind, with due regard to the protection of the marine environment.
21. Delegations also noted the significant progress achieved by the Council in the development of the draft exploitation regulations and welcomed the new roadmap for the remaining part of the twenty-eighth session and parts I and II of the twenty-ninth session with a view to the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation during the thirtieth session<sup>20</sup>. Delegations equally welcomed the goal of having a consolidated draft text of the regulations for a holistic review of the harmonized text after part III of the twenty-eighth session of the Council. Notwithstanding the efforts to implement a roadmap, some delegations cautioned against the establishment of stringent timelines for the completion of the work remaining, stressing that the Authority should not be bound by a deadline if all the elements necessary to establish a robust legal framework were not in place. Several delegations highlighted that contracts for exploitation should not be granted until a consensus on the legal regime has been reached whilst most delegations underscored that strong and robust exploitation regulations are the best way to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment.

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<sup>19</sup> Delivered by Cook Islands on behalf of Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

<sup>20</sup> ISBA/28/C/24

Delegations equally expressed support for the ongoing work by contractors in exploration and research to promote and gather more environmental data to safeguard the fragile ecosystem in the oceans.

22. Most delegations highlighted the contribution of the Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development noting that it already contributes to 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and in particular to the Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources. Delegations further welcomed the support of the Authority to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development as well as the active participation and representation of the Authority in the process leading to the adoption of an internationally legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions. On this, many delegations welcomed the fact that the new international instrument recognized the stewardship of the Authority for the Area and its resources, whilst further reinforcing its unique mandate for the governance of the ocean.
23. Many delegations acknowledged with appreciation the Authority's contribution to other global and regional processes such as the Kuming-Montreal global biodiversity framework as well as the continued productive and positive cooperation with United Nations agencies and organizations. Several delegations welcomed the approval by the Council of the Agreement of Cooperation between the International Labour Organization and the Authority,<sup>21</sup> with a view to ensuring the highest international standards on human health and safety and conditions of work on board vessels used for activities in the Area, as required by Article 146 of the Convention.
24. Several delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring that the legal mandate assigned to different organisations with competence for the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment be respected pursuant to the specific competence recognized by the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and specific regional treaty with a view to avoid overlap and enhance coordination amongst them. Recalling the exclusive competence recognized by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement to the Authority to regulate and organize activities in the Area including in relation to the protection of the environment from potential harmful effects that may arise from such activities. Noting the recent adoption of a decision by the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) to extend the scope of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin marine protected area by including the Area, some delegations expressed concerns on the potential overlap of such a decision with the mandate of the Authority as well as in relation to the consultation process followed and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for the Council at its 29<sup>th</sup> session detailing communication that took place in that regard between the Secretariat of the Authority and the OSPAR Commission over this decision; assessing the potential impact of the decision on the Authority's mandate and providing recommendations on how to prevent interference with the Authority's mandate whilst enhancing cooperation and consultation with other relevant organisations. Delegations also noted that Japan will be hosting a workshop on "Regional Environmental Management Plan in the Area of Northwest Pacific Ocean" in February 2024 in Tokyo.
25. The majority of delegations welcomed the decision of the Council on the establishment of the post of Interim Director General of the Enterprise.<sup>22</sup> Several delegations shared the view that considering the current advanced stage in the

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<sup>21</sup> ISBA/28/C/16

<sup>22</sup> ISBA/28/C/23

development of the draft exploitation regulations for mineral resources of the Area by the Council, the operationalization of the Enterprise was an integral part of the necessary evolution of the legal regime of the Area pursuant to articles 153(2) (a) and 170 of the Convention as well as annex Section 2 of the 1994 Agreement. Many delegations also expressed the importance of progressing with the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission.

26. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the continued contributions from member States and stakeholders to the Voluntary Trust Funds, highlighting the important role this plays in ensuring full participation and representation by developing States in the meetings of the Authority. Delegations equally called upon member States in arrears of payment of assessed contributions to pay those arrears as soon as possible and urged the Secretary-General to continue to engage actively with members in arrears.
27. Delegations also welcomed the establishment of the ISA Partnership Fund and underlined the importance of the objectives of the fund to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research for the benefit of humankind as a whole and to as well as to develop the capacities of developing States members of the Authority in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Delegations noted that the establishment of the Fund is a crucial step towards achieving the shared goals of the Authority and encouraged other Member States, observers, and other stakeholders to donate to the Fund.
28. Many delegations commended the work and efforts invested by the Authority for enhancing the capacity of developing States in line with the key result areas set out in the Capacity Development Strategy adopted in 2022. Many noted that between July 2022 and June 2023 more than 380 individuals had benefited from at least one capacity-building/development activity implemented by the Authority. Delegations expressed appreciation on the number of trainees on the contractors' training program (68 over the reporting period and over 350 during the lifetime of the program).
29. Several delegations also noted the positive approach taken by the Authority of working through national focal points (NAFOP-CD) noting that as of June 2023, 59 member States had nominated a national focal point, with a view to ensuring effective coordination with member States and enhancing the level of applicants. Several delegations further welcomed the upcoming launch of the alumni network of former trainees to serve as a pool of knowledge for developing States. Many delegations welcomed the ongoing organization of expert webinar such as the "Deep DiplomaSea" series for diplomats and senior representatives of the United Nations agencies as well as the recent launch of "Deep-Dive", the e-learning platform of the Authority as a new mechanism to build and develop capacities of developing States.
30. Several delegations noted with appreciation specific projects implemented to address the specific needs identified by developing States, members of the Authority and in particular the Africa Deep-Seabed Resources project (ADSR) jointly implemented by the African Union and the Authority with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) from which the latest workshop took place in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2022; and the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth implemented jointly by the Authority and the UN Department of Social Affairs with the support of NORAD. On the latter, some delegations specifically expressed appreciation for the outcomes of the workshop held in Tonga in June 2022, aimed at discussing the elements pertaining to the equitable sharing of benefits from activities carried out in the Area.

31. Other delegations also welcomed the progress made by the ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre and the collaborative programs launched respectively with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the UN technology bank for least developing countries.
32. Many delegations commended the Secretary-General's personal commitment to advancing women's empowerment and leadership in ocean affairs including in deep-sea research including through the Impact Group for Research and Oceans for Women (IGROW) established in June 2022 through the International Gender Network. Many delegations further acknowledged the first Women in the Law of the Sea conference organized in September 2022 in New York with the support of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Malta to the United Nations and to the Authority for the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Several delegations also expressed appreciation for the success of the measures taken for promoting gender parity among the secretariat staff, including in senior professional roles, and the institution of 'family friendly' policies.
33. Many delegations also specifically underscored the significant progress and outcomes of the Women in Deep-Sea Research (WIDSR) project as a vital initiative to address the under-representation of women in deep-sea science and related disciplines. Many delegations acknowledged the launch on World Ocean Day celebrated on 8 June 2023, the first ever global mentoring program "See Her Exceed" (S.H.E.) aimed at women scientists from developing States and particularly those from least developing States, landlocked developing States and small island developing States. Several delegations also noted with interest that during the reporting period, more contractors had pledged to allocate 50 per cent of their training opportunities to suitably qualified female applicants under the WIDSR project.
34. Many delegations welcomed the increase in collaboration and strategic partnerships established between the Authority and national, regional, and international organizations, noting with appreciation the increased number of partnerships established with research organizations from developing States. Several delegations recognized with appreciation the cooperative arrangement between the Authority and the International Hydrographic Organization, through the AREA20230 initiative launched in 2022, noting the significant contribution made to the global efforts undertaken by the GEBSCO-Nippon Seabed 2030 project. Delegations urged the Authority to further promote and encourage the advancement of marine scientific research in the Area and the transfer of technology to support equal and effective participation in the activities of the Authority by developing States in all regions, noting with appreciation initiatives and projects such as the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative, and the TRIDENT project (Technology based impact assessment tool for sustainable, transparent deep sea mining exploration and exploitation).
35. Several delegations expressed satisfaction with the approach followed by the Authority which was operating in an inclusive and transparent manner. Many delegations also commended the work of the secretariat in advancing deep-sea literacy of the general public on the legal regime of the Area and the work of the Authority and noted the quality of the publications and research papers produced by the secretariat to support critical discussions under development by different organs of the Authority and invited the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to continue their efforts in that respect.
36. Whilst some delegations further noted with appreciation reforms undertaken over the years to equip the Secretariat with the necessary resources to ensure that it is

fit for purpose, Ghana on behalf of the African group, as well as other delegations from African member States expressed the importance of ensuring better geographical representation of African experts in the Secretariat, particularly at the senior management level.

37. During the 206th meeting of the Assembly, several delegations made statements of a general nature. Several delegations, expressed their national positions on deep seabed mining and the need to ensure robust regulatory frameworks for the protection of the marine environment, prior to the approval of a plan of work for exploitation. The delegation of France highlighted that the world was faced with the collapse of marine biodiversity, rising sea levels and an increase in ocean temperature due to the effects of climate change, the results of which would mostly affect countries with low-lying and fragile coasts and Island nations. Upon this premise, it called for members of the Authority to support a total ban on exploitation activities and prioritise the development of a robust framework for the effective protection of the marine environment whilst undertaking scientific research to better understand the impacts of human activities in the seabed.

## **VIII. Statement by the President of the Council on the work of the Council for the twenty-seventh session and twenty-eighth session**

38. The President of the Council, Ambassador Juan José González Mijares (Mexico), gave an oral report on the work of the Council covering the first part of the twenty-eighth session which was held from 13 to 31 March 2023,<sup>23</sup> and the second part, held from 10 July to 21 July 2023.<sup>24</sup> The Assembly also took note of the report of the Council on the third part of the twenty-seventh session held from 31 October to 11 November 2022.<sup>25</sup>
39. Delegations welcomed the various outcomes reached by the Council during its meetings, including the significant progress made in the development of the draft exploitation regulations for minerals of the Area, decisions adopted with respect to the establishment of the position of an interim director-general;<sup>26</sup> and two decisions relating to the timeline and understanding of the application of the two-year period pursuant to section 1, paragraph 15, of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>27</sup>

## **IX. Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee**

40. At its 198th meeting, on 24 July 2023, the Assembly considered the report of the Finance Committee.<sup>28</sup> Delegations took note of the status of the various funds and commended member States and other stakeholders for donations made to the respective funds.

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<sup>23</sup> ISBA/28/C/11.

<sup>24</sup> ISBA/28/C/11/add.1.

<sup>25</sup> ISBA/27/C/21/Add.2

<sup>26</sup> ISBA/28/C/23 and ISBA/28/C/21

<sup>27</sup> ISBA/28/C/24 and ISBA/28/C/25

<sup>28</sup> ISBA/28/A/4-ISBA/28/C/13



41. Delegations also welcomed the work undertaken by the Committee in its assessment of the justifications provided by the Secretary-General on the proposed costs and budgetary impacts of the operationalization of the Enterprise as well as the forecasted budgetary requirements associated with the anticipated work of the Authority for the period 2025–2030,<sup>29</sup> in conformity with the evolutionary approach contained in the 1994 Agreement.<sup>30</sup>
42. With respect to the development of rules, regulations, and procedures on the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area, some delegations expressed or reiterated their preference for the establishment of a Common Heritage Fund (CHF) (former Seabed Sustainability Fund) over a mechanism that would favor direct distribution whilst others suggested that both options should be considered. Some delegations also welcomed the proposed objectives and scope of the CHF contained in the annex to the report of the Finance Committee suggesting also that the scope of the CHF should not be restricted to activities in the Area, and that the proceeds could be channeled towards other global commons such as climate change or addressing global environmental issues such as marine plastic pollution. One delegation noted that that the objective of capacity development should not diminish the obligation of contractors in that respect .

## **X. Consideration and adoption of a supplementary budget for the financial period 2023–2024**

43. At its 198th meeting, taking into account the recommendations of the Council and Finance Committee,<sup>31</sup> the Assembly adopted a decision on financial and budgetary matters, including the adoption of a supplementary budget relating to the costs associated with the establishment of the position of Interim Director General for the Enterprise.<sup>32</sup>

## **XI. Consideration of the draft strategic plan of the Authority for the five-year period 2024–2028.**

44. At the 203rd and 206th meetings of the Assembly, the Secretary-General presented his report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023 and the proposed draft strategic plan for the period 2024–2028.<sup>33</sup> The Secretary-General recalled that pursuant to the decision of Assembly providing for a regular review of the strategic plan and monitoring of its impact, the Secretariat had commissioned an independent assessment of the implementation of the Strategic Plan from 2019 to 2023, published on 25 May 2023.<sup>34</sup> The analysis carried out by the consultant was based on several reports prepared by the Authority since 2019 to keep members and observers informed on the status of the implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2019–2023<sup>35</sup> and the findings

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<sup>29</sup> ISBA/28/FC/2

<sup>30</sup> Annex Section 1 paragraph 3 of the 1994 Agreement

<sup>31</sup> ISBA/28/C/21; ISBA/28/A/3/- ISBA/28/C/12 and ISBA/28/A/3/Add.1-ISBA/28/C/12/Add.1.

<sup>32</sup> ISBA/28/A/15

<sup>33</sup> ISBA/28/A/7

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Review-of-implementation-of-ISA-SP-2019-2023-Final.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> See the annual reports of the Secretary-General under article 166 (4) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in particular those for 2020 (ISBA/26/A/2), 2021 (ISBA/26/A/2/Add.1), 2022 (ISBA/27/A/2 and ISBA/27/A/2/Add.1) and 2023

of the independent report commissioned by the Secretary-General in 2021 to assess the contribution of the Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the action plan of the Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development<sup>36</sup> and the capacity development strategy of the Authority.<sup>37</sup>

45. The secretariat launched an open consultation for all stakeholders on the draft strategic plan for 2024–2028 during the period from 26 May to 26 June 2023, inviting submissions and comments. A total of 18 submissions on the draft strategic plan were received. The largest number of submissions was made by members of the Authority (10),<sup>38</sup> followed by contractors (6).<sup>39</sup> Two submissions were made by observers.<sup>40</sup> A second consultation was launched from 26 June to 25 July 2023.
46. Several delegations noted that the strategic plan and high-level action plan for 2019–2023 had significantly contributed to advance the implementation of the mandate of the Authority whilst ensuring coordination amongst the different organs.
47. Several delegations welcomed the draft strategic plan, noting that it provided continuity in the work of the Authority at a time where important developments were taking place in relation to the legal regime of the Area and the implementation of the evolutionary approach. Many delegations also noted that that the Authority was still engaged in the development of the draft exploitation regulations and in the period before the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation.
48. Taking into account the concerns of some delegations as to the short time allowed for consultation on the draft strategic plan, including the need to ensure stability in the work of the Authority, during its 206<sup>th</sup> meeting on 28 July, the Assembly decided to extend the current strategic plan (for the period 2019 to 2023) for two years, and further requested the Secretary-General to review the high-level action plan for 2019–2023 with a view to extending it in line with the extension of the strategic plan.<sup>41</sup>

## **XII. Fostering international and regional cooperation in support of the stewardship of the Area.**

49. At the 202nd meeting, the Assembly took note of and approved the signing of by the Secretary-General, on behalf of the Authority, two memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the Authority and the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC) with a view to formalizing their cooperation in order

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(ISBA/28/A/2); the report on the implementation by the Assembly of the strategic plan for the period 2019 –2023 (ISBA/26/A/9); the statement by the President on the work of the Assembly of the Authority at its twenty-sixth session (ISBA/26/A/34); the report of the Finance Committee (ISBA/26/A/10- ISBA/26/C/21); and the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the second part of its twenty-sixth session (ISBA/26/C/12/Add.1).

<sup>36</sup> See ISBA/26/A/17

<sup>37</sup> See ISBA/27/A/5 and ISBA/27/A/11.

<sup>38</sup> Canada, Ecuador, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Nauru, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation and Senegal.

<sup>39</sup> China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association, Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. and Tonga Offshore Mining Limited

<sup>40</sup> Deep Sea Conservation Coalition and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

<sup>41</sup> ISBA/28/A/16

to design and implement a dedicated capacity development program to address the specific needs of member States in the region and establish a dedicated curriculum on part XI of the Convention for African diplomats to support the development of enhanced knowledge and expertise in African countries, including by developing a series of activities for the dissemination of knowledge and expertise on the law of the sea and in relation to matters pertaining to the implementation of part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement in Africa.<sup>42</sup> The second MOU is between the Authority and the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt (NIOFE) for the establishment of a joint regional training and research centre.<sup>43</sup>

50. The delegation of Ghana on behalf of the African group introduced both MOUs, noting that both initiatives will support the fulfilment of the Authority's responsibilities and obligations in relation to capacity-building, as well as technical and international cooperation for the development of knowledge and expertise through the active participation and involvement of relevant regional and national institutions in line with the strategic directions identified in the Authority's strategic plan for the period 2019–2023 and its revised version and the capacity development strategy.

### **XIII. Report on proposed amendments to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission.**

51. At the 197th meeting of the Assembly, it took note of a report on the proposed amendments to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission<sup>44</sup> and during the same meeting, adopted a decision approving the amendments to the Statute and requested the Secretary-General to notify the Secretary -General of the UN of the acceptance by the Authority of the proposed amendments to the statute<sup>45</sup>.

### **XIV. Dates of the next session of the Assembly**

52. The twenty-eighth session of the Assembly will be held in Kingston, Jamaica from 29 July to 2 August 2024. It will be the turn of the Eastern European group to nominate a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly.

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<sup>42</sup> ISBA/28/A/12

<sup>43</sup> ISBA/28/A/13

<sup>44</sup> ISBA/28/A/5–ISBA/28/C/14

<sup>45</sup> ISBA/28/A/14