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Items 14 and 15 of the provisional agenda of the Assembly*

Adoption of the budget of the Authority

Adoption of the scale of assessment for the contributions to the budget of the Authority

Agenda item 16 of the Council

Budget of the International Seabed Authority

Proposed budget for the International Seabed Authority for the financial period 2025–2026

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report sets out the proposed budgetary requirements for the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026. In preparing the proposed budget, the Secretary-General is cognizant of the need to minimize costs to States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to ensure cost-effectiveness in the work of all organs and subsidiary bodies of the Authority.

2. It is recalled that, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, the setting up and functioning of the organs and subsidiary bodies of the Authority shall be based on an evolutionary approach, taking into account two critical elements: first, the governance architecture envisioned in the Convention and the Agreement; and second, the functional needs of the organs and bodies concerned in order that they may discharge their respective responsibilities at various stages of the development of activities in the Area.

3. In his report to the Finance Committee in 2023 on the financing of the Authority and forecast budget requirements for the period 2025–2030,¹ the Secretary-General had provided an indicative projection for the financial period 2025–2026 of \$27,200,777, as a baseline for the Committee to work from and reflecting the

* ISBA/29/A/L.1.

¹ ISBA/28/FC/2 and ISBA/28/FC/2/Corr.1.



anticipated evolution of the work of the Authority. The Assembly, in its decision [ISBA/28/A/15](#) of 24 July 2023, took note of the estimated financial and budgetary implications associated with the expected evolution of the work of the Authority over the period from 2025 to 2030 and of the need to ensure that it is equipped with the capacity and resources necessary to fulfil its obligations under the Convention and the Agreement.

4. For the financial period 2025–2026, the Secretary-General estimates the budgetary requirements of the Authority at \$27,100,000, which is slightly below the initial projection made in 2023. Notwithstanding an increase in the administrative expenses of the secretariat (which account for 65 per cent of the total budget), the proposed budget is based on the principle of zero real growth. Cost increases are in line with external factors, including inflationary pressures on the United States dollar and Jamaican dollar, leading to increases in the cost of goods and services, and increases in salaries and allowances mandated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and adopted by the General Assembly. The same principle has been applied to all other sections of the proposed budget. Considering the ongoing evolution of the work of the Authority, the Secretary-General proposes the addition of two new staff positions and the redeployment of one existing position over the financial period. For the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit (section 4 of the budget), one additional staff position is proposed for 2026.

5. In the summary narrative that follows, the main changes proposed are identified and compared with the approved budget for the financial period 2023–2024. Detailed justifications for and a breakdown of all budget lines will be made available, as usual, to the Finance Committee in the form of conference room papers.

II. Administrative expenditure of the secretariat (section 1)

6. The proposed budget for the administrative expenditure of the secretariat represents 65 per cent of the total budget, with an increase over the financial period of \$3,337,000. Of this amount, \$2,849,000 represents an increase in staff costs. The balance of the increase (\$488,000) is accounted for by inflationary increases in the costs of goods and services procured locally and internationally. No new expenditure is proposed.

A. Established posts

7. The secretariat must be able to call upon a multi-skilled, versatile and mobile workforce that will work across disciplines to fulfil the complex and interrelated mandates of the Authority in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The secretariat currently has 55 established posts, including 2 posts which were established in 2023 for the Enterprise. The Authority is a participant in the United Nations common system of salaries and allowances and applies the scales of salaries and allowances mandated by the General Assembly and ICSC. The relatively substantial increase in the provision for established posts is accounted for by increases in the relevant scales, which are determined by the General Assembly and which the Secretary-General is mandated to apply. These include regular increases in the post adjustment rates for Kingston (52 per cent in 2022 compared with 57 per cent in March 2024) and a significant increase in salaries for staff in National Professional Officer posts and staff in the General Service category. With effect from June 2023, the salary scales for those categories were increased by 21.75 per cent and 13.5 per cent, respectively, with a budgetary impact of \$260,000 per annum. While there was no increase in the salary scale for Professional staff in 2023, ICSC applied a 3 per cent increase in

pensionable remuneration. ICSC also increased, with retroactive effect, the parental leave entitlement to 26 weeks, leading in some cases to shortages of staff and the need to recruit staff temporarily in order to maintain the delivery of services to member States.

8. The Secretary-General proposes the following new posts for the financial period: the creation of a new post of Stakeholder Engagement Officer (P-4) and the regularization of a post of Associate Legal Officer (P-2), which is currently encumbered on a temporary basis. The total budgetary impact of the proposed new posts over the financial period is \$605,000. In addition, and considering the need to minimize costs, the Secretary-General proposes to reclassify one established post from the P-2 to the P-3 level.

9. The proposed new posts are as follows:

(a) Stakeholder Engagement Officer (P-4): The Stakeholder Engagement Officer will be based in the Communications Unit within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Since 2020, member States and other stakeholders have consistently emphasized the necessity for more proactive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, in particular concerning the development of the draft regulations on exploitation. The Stakeholder Engagement Officer will play a pivotal role in enabling the Authority to fulfil its increasing need for active engagement with all stakeholders;

(b) Associate Legal Officer (P-2): This post is situated in the Office of Legal Affairs and reports to the Legal Officer (Regulatory Affairs). The post is currently occupied on a temporary basis and has proved to be essential in view of the substantially increased workload related to the development of the draft regulations on exploitation. The Officer would be expected to assist with the various streams of work related to the development of the draft regulations, including standards and guidelines, to support the exploitation of resources in the Area. This would involve assisting in the development of background papers for the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee and the Council.

10. In addition, the Secretary-General proposes the reclassification of one post in the Capacity Development Unit of the Executive Office from the P-2 to the P-3 level as a Policy and Planning Officer. This follows a comprehensive review of the functions of the Capacity Development Unit, which plays a crucial role in administering the contractors' training programme and supporting various initiatives that are aligned with the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2025 and the capacity development strategy of the Authority. The addition of a Policy and Planning Officer will ensure optimal resource utilization and simultaneously bolster the Unit's capability to manage its diverse and growing portfolio, including initiatives such as the Africa Deep Seabed Resources project and the Women in Deep-Sea Research project. The incremental cost is estimated at \$38,000 over the financial period.

B. Common staff costs

11. Common staff costs encompass the estimated total expenditure on staff entitlements, including components such as the education grant, rental subsidy, home leave travel, travel on recruitment and separation and insurance subsidies. Costs are determined by the package of allowances and benefits established by ICSC, as well as the regular staff turnover (recruitments and separations), but can be highly unpredictable as expenditure is dependent on staff profiles. The last two years have seen significant increases in all the elements of common staff costs. For example, education grant entitlements increased from \$170,000 in 2022 to \$280,000 in 2023.

The Authority has experienced recurrent cost overruns in this budget line (amounting to \$450,000 in 2023), which is indicative of persistent underbudgeting. This budget line, and other budget lines under the programme budget, are also affected by an increase in the daily subsistence allowance for Kingston from \$290 to \$520 (a 76 per cent increase), effective from April 2024, adding approximately \$65,000 per year to common staff costs for initial recruitment and settling-in grants as a result of staff turnover. The proposed provision of \$5,239,000 for the financial period 2025–2026 is an accurate assessment of the common staff costs based on the current staff profile of the secretariat.

C. Library books and supplies

12. In the light of the strategic development of the library and knowledge management strategy, the proposed budget for the period 2025–2026 reflects the per cent increase necessary to support the transformation of the Satya N. Nandan Library into a dynamic knowledge centre for staff and stakeholders alike. This increment will stabilize and expand the knowledge repository, enhance digital content offerings and strengthen partnerships. Key investments include the implementation of an online public access catalogue system, thus bolstering the digital repository infrastructure and upgrading the storage facilities. These enhancements are pivotal for fostering knowledge-sharing, promoting collaboration and ensuring the library's evolution into an interactive hub that aligns with the Authority's strategic goals and operational efficiency.

D. Acquisition of equipment and furniture and others

13. The budget allocation for acquisitions in the financial period 2025–2026 is primarily focused on security-related equipment, such as closed-circuit television systems, the replacement of essential office furniture, routine replacement of one vehicle and other information technology-related expenditure. These acquisitions are crucial for office well-being and to create a safe and conducive workspace for staff members. Concerning information technology infrastructure, investments are planned to replace and upgrade equipment with a view to enhancing storage capabilities and system reliability. In addition, the acquisition plan encompasses hardware for robust network security, necessary server hardware support and accessories to optimize operational efficiency. Other components include additional capacity for improved data storage, offline backup storage for backup system resilience and investments in annual disaster recovery site costs as well as Internet bandwidth upgrades to ensure uninterrupted connectivity and data accessibility.

E. Software licences and subscriptions

14. In recent years, there has been a trend towards subscription services and electronic licences for software packages and other information technology products. These include creative design packages for communications support, sophisticated mapping and geographic information system software, productivity tools (such as Microsoft Office), communications tools and security software. To manage these costs effectively, it is proposed to separate out all subscription costs into a new budget line that is specifically dedicated to subscriptions. The proposed provision of \$82,000 represents the current cost of subscriptions following a rigorous internal review of necessary costs. It is important to note that the proposed provision is not new money, but represents costs that were already incurred under multiple other budget lines. It is

itemized separately in the proposed budget for greater transparency and to ensure better internal control of expenditure.

F. Building management

15. This budget line encompasses the expenses associated with the premises of the Authority, including maintenance, general utilities, minor works and the rental of its New York office. Projections for 2024 indicate that expenditure will be \$443,000. Provision is made for an inflationary increase of 7 per cent in 2025 and 2026. These costs will potentially be affected by a 44 per cent increase in the minimum wage in Jamaica. No capital expenditure is proposed.

G. International Public Sector Accounting Standards/enterprise resource planning

16. Provision is made for the routine enhancement and upgrade of modules of the existing SAP Business One enterprise resource planning system. The enhancement and upgrade will empower employees to navigate the software effectively, thus streamlining processes, reducing errors and boosting productivity. An additional \$28,000 is allocated for training, which is crucial for maximizing operational efficiency and resource utilization.

III. Conference services (section 2)

17. The provision for conference services is maintained at \$3,413,000, with no substantial increase (1.6 per cent) over the previous budget cycle. This estimate is based on actual costs incurred during the financial period 2023–2024 and the assumption that the pattern of meetings will be maintained at a maximum of 48 days (5 days for the Assembly, 20 days for the Council, 20 days for the Legal and Technical Commission and 3 days for the Finance Committee) in 2025 and 2026. The major costs under this section are relating to remote interpretation services and the translation of documentation. With respect to interpretation, the secretariat has renewed its contract with Interprefy for the provision of remote services and will continue to explore ways of reducing costs in the future. The United Nations provides translations, the approximate cost of which is \$930 per page. Rigorous controls are in place at the secretariat level to restrict the length and quantity of official documentation, but it is obviously difficult to predict future demand (e.g. the translation of the draft regulations on exploitation and associated standards and guidelines would cost approximately \$750,000 alone). No provision has been made for any increase in cost of the rental of the Jamaica Conference Centre, notwithstanding the ongoing renovation project. No provision is included for additional meetings of the Legal and Technical Commission or the Council, if an application for approval of a plan of work for exploitation is received.

IV. Programme expenditure (section 3)

18. The programme budget represents the costs of the activities undertaken by the secretariat in line with the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2025 and the directions endorsed by member States. In previous budget cycles, the Finance Committee had endorsed maintaining the programme budget at a desirable range of between 16 and 18 per cent of the total budget. Considering the necessary increases elsewhere in the budget, the Secretary-General has taken a zero real growth approach

in preparing the programme budget, which has resulted in its reduction to 13 per cent of the total budget. Increases in expenditure are in line with inflation, amounting to \$277,000 (8 per cent), with one new programme added to reflect the cost of the Authority's participation in the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development to be held in Nice, France, in 2025. The following summary narratives reflect the orientation and expected outputs under each programme.

A. Development of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area (programme 3.1)

19. The objectives of the Authority concerning the strengthening of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area for the period 2019–2025 are set out in strategic direction 2 of the strategic plan and the high-level action plan adopted by the Assembly at the twenty-fifth session of the Authority (see [ISBA/25/A/15](#) and [ISBA/25/A/15/Corr.1](#)).

20. The strengthening of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area is an ongoing process that is currently focused on the development of the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and the associated standards and guidelines, in line with a road map agreed by the Council in 2023. It is expected that this work will continue.

21. It is also recalled that the Council had requested the Legal and Technical Commission to undertake work on standards and guidelines as a matter of priority, bearing in mind that necessary standards and guidelines should be developed in parallel and be consistent with the finalization of the regulations as a package (see [ISBA/26/C/57](#)). It is further recalled that the Commission decided to adopt a three-phase approach for the development of draft standards and guidelines: phase 1 refers to those standards and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place by the time of adoption of the draft regulations on exploitation; phase 2 refers to those standards and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place prior to the receipt of an application of a plan of work for exploitation; and phase 3 refers to those standards and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place before commercial mining activities commence in the Area (see [ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1](#)). It is noted that the Commission undertook work on standards and guidelines for exploitation in the Area as a matter of priority in 2020 and 2021 and issued a total of 10 sets of phase 1 draft standards and guidelines after its last meeting in 2021. The standards and guidelines were revised according to feedback received during stakeholder consultations and submitted to the Council for consideration in early 2022. Accordingly, a new review process, based on the feedback received from stakeholder consultations and the continued development of the regulations on exploitation, will be required to reconcile the draft standards and guidelines with the regulations.

22. The secretariat will support the work of the organs of the Authority by preparing expert studies and analyses, as required, assisting in producing revisions of the draft regulations and developing draft standards and guidelines for consideration by the Commission and organizing the required consultations with stakeholders, which would include workshops on the continued work on the standards and guidelines.

23. Expected outputs include:

(a) Continued support for the development of the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and associated phase 1 standards and guidelines, with a view to their adoption by the relevant organs of the Authority;

(b) Progress in the development of phase 2 standards and guidelines with a view to their adoption by the relevant organs of the Authority;

(c) The development and adoption of a system of payments and corresponding rates of payment based on the evolution of the financial model under discussion by the Council and expected contractor business plans;

(d) The further development of equitable sharing criteria for the distribution of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area;

(e) The production of reports, discussion papers, technical studies and other studies requested by the organs of the Authority.

24. Programme 3.1 will be implemented under the direction of the Office of Legal Affairs. Substantive input to the development of the draft standards and guidelines, expert studies and analyses will be provided through a combination of in-house expertise and consultants, for which financial provision is required. Workshop budgets will include provisions to ensure the participation of representatives of developing States, as requested by the Assembly. A travel budget is required to attend workshops, meetings and international conferences relating to the legal and technical aspects of the regulatory framework. A budget for external printing is required to publish workshop outputs as technical studies of the Authority and for communications to members of the Authority.

B. Protection of the marine environment, including regional environmental management plans (programme 3.2)

25. Programme 3.2 supports the implementation of the responsibilities and mandates of the Authority under article 145 of the Convention, whereby measures are to be taken with respect to activities in the Area to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from the harmful effects that may arise from such activities. As such, this programme addresses strategic direction 3 of the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2025, in particular regarding regional environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and the ongoing development of regional environmental management plans and environmental thresholds.

26. The specific objectives of programme 3.2 include:

(a) To continue facilitating the implementation and review of the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, focusing on the further actions identified in [ISBA/26/C/43](#), as requested by the Council in its decision [ISBA/26/C/58](#);

(b) To advance the development of regional environmental management plans in the priority regions identified by the Council, building on the outcomes from expert workshops, and support the necessary review of such plans, as well as their implementation after adoption by the Council, including the continued synthesis of environmental data collected by contractors;

(c) To ensure the timely check of the completeness of environmental impact statements in accordance with the regulatory framework of the Authority;

(d) To provide necessary scientific and technical inputs for the development and implementation of the relevant rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority relating to the protection of the marine environment, including standards and guidelines;

(e) To provide necessary administrative and technical inputs for the development of environmental thresholds, including the necessary adjustment of such

thresholds in the light of new knowledge and technological developments, in line with the request of the Council or Legal and Technical Commission;

(f) To provide the necessary scientific and technical support for the engagement of the Authority in the implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, as well as other global and regional processes and initiatives related to the protection of the marine environment.

27. Through this programme, the development and implementation of regional environmental management plans will be ensured, including through the synthesis and analysis of scientific data and information, and the development of environmental thresholds and completeness check of environmental impact assessments relating to the activities in the Area are undertaken in a scientifically robust manner. Specific accomplishments expected are:

(a) The convening of one expert workshop on the review of the implementation of the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone;

(b) The convening of one expert workshop to advance the development of regional environmental management plans in the priority regions identified by the Council;

(c) The organization of necessary information-sharing and consultations on the draft regional environmental management plan developed by the Legal and Technical Commission for the Area of the North-West Pacific Ocean;

(d) The review and synthesis of environmental baseline data from DeepData and other scientific data and information to support the development and review of regional environmental management plans, as well as the development of environmental thresholds, and facilitate the identification of data gaps and related sampling efforts to address such gaps;

(e) The facilitation of the necessary review and implementation of the regional environmental management plans, as guided by the Legal and Technical Commission, including the organization of priority activities identified under the regional environmental management plans;

(f) The timely check of the completeness of environmental impact statements submitted by contractors;

(g) The further study of the interactions between future mining activities and other marine industries in collaboration with relevant international organizations;

(h) Technical collaboration related to the implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, including coherence in the application of scientific criteria and methodologies for developing area-based management tools and environmental impact assessments;

(i) The provision of technical inputs for engagement in other global and regional processes and initiatives, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic.

28. Dedicated funding will be required for the implementation of the programme, for the commissioning of consultants for scientific data collection, analysis and review, the organization of planned regional environmental management plan

workshops and environmental threshold workshops, participation in various relevant international and regional processes and engagement with stakeholders.

C. Data management (resources and environment) (programme 3.4)

29. Programme 3.4 supports the specific mandates assigned to the Authority under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to encourage, facilitate and ensure the sharing of data collected from activities in the Area while promoting the coordination of deep-sea research efforts by the industry, scientific community and member States. In particular, it underpins the implementation of the data management strategic road map 2024–2028 designed to support the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2025 and the delivery of the six strategic research priorities outlined in the action plan for marine scientific research in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

30. The specific objectives of programme 3.4 during the financial period 2025–2026 include:

(a) To further enhance the availability of and access to environmental data and information;

(b) To facilitate the scientific analysis and synthesis of environmental data and information in support of the regulatory work of the Authority;

(c) To ensure effective governance procedures and technical systems for the safe storage of the Authority's data;

(d) To enhance the interoperability of the DeepData environmental database with other available ocean databases.

31. Specific outputs expected are:

(a) Increased information technology resilience and improved data security architecture;

(b) Analysis of data in DeepData to inform and support the scientific approach and facts-based work of various organs of the Authority in summarizing and analysing data collected from the Area;

(c) The development of the oceanographic data module on DeepData utilizing geographic information systems to drive visualization for greater understanding;

(d) Improved quality and quantity of data in DeepData by the effective use of reporting templates of the Authority and the integration of metadata.

32. Infrastructure upgrades will continue to be required as part of the maintenance and support budget. This includes the procurement of additional hardware and software components in line with industry standards to ensure increased information technology resilience and security within the data management infrastructure of the secretariat. Software development will continue to require consultants who will be tasked with improving the user interface on DeepData and developing new features. This will entail developing reporting tools to assist the secretariat and the Legal and Technical Commission. In addition, consultants will be needed to deliver the oceanographic data module for DeepData. The secretariat also aims to conduct two workshops on best practices in scientific data management and supporting the data management capacities of developing countries. A travel budget is required to facilitate the continued participation of the secretariat at various relevant international meetings for data exchange and to encourage the engagement of various user groups associated with DeepData.

D. Promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area (programme 3.5)

33. Programme 3.5 supports activities related to the mandates and roles of the Authority regarding marine scientific research in the Area, in line with article 143 and other relevant provisions in the Convention. The programme is aligned with the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2025 and is focused on advancing the implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research of the Authority, adopted by the Assembly in 2020, and providing the best available scientific evidence to support global ocean processes. The programme activities are designed to facilitate collaborative scientific partnerships for compiling, generating and synthesizing scientific information for an enhanced understanding of the deep-sea environment and ecosystems in the Area.

34. The specific objectives of programme 3.5 include:

(a) To provide necessary scientific inputs and develop scientific methodologies to inform and support spatial planning and other relevant environmental management measures to protect the marine environment;

(b) To support region-wide collaborations for coordinated sustained deep ocean observations, with a special focus on areas of particular environmental interest, to inform the design and development of monitoring programmes and inform the design and review of area-based management tools for habitat protection;

(c) To facilitate the development of modelling approaches on deep-sea ecosystems to contribute to global processes and existing efforts and indices reporting on the health and state of oceans. The modelling approaches will promote the continued review, use and dissemination of scientific data and inform the identification and review of environmental threshold values and ecosystem resilience, while catalysing scientific cooperation among member States, contractors, scientific communities and other relevant stakeholders;

(d) To stimulate the development of innovative tools and methodologies to continue to advance innovation in deep-sea biodiversity research for different ocean basins by proceeding to support collaborative approaches for taxonomic standardization, which will allow the enhanced assessment of biodiversity at the local and regional levels.

35. Programme 3.5 will help to deliver the six strategic priorities of the action plan for marine scientific research of the Authority as follows:

(a) Contribution to knowledge-sharing networks for coordinated long-term deep-sea observations to stimulate the design of long-term observatories in ocean basins, in particular in areas targeted for environmental protection, in partnership with existing deep ocean observing networks, scientific institutions, contractors and other international organizations;

(b) Development and validation of integrated modelling approaches for capturing the state and health of the deep-sea ocean through the assessment of temporal and spatial trends of environmental parameters, including for detecting potential anthropogenic impacts;

(c) Advanced taxonomic identification and description of deep-sea species with a focus on pelagic communities and functional diversity, as well as taxonomic data standardization, including through science-industry collaborations, and the development of species identification toolkits (e.g. regional species lists and underwater image and genetic reference catalogues);

(d) Development of associated information products and knowledge outputs for dissemination to different target audiences (policymakers, scientists and the wider public) and to effectively communicate scientific findings and ensure their uptake in other global processes, where relevant.

36. Dedicated funding will be required to implement this programme, as well as consultancies with specialized technical expertise to develop mathematical models and advanced biodiversity assessment tools. In addition, funding will be allocated to organize meetings for scientific discussion on the modelling and programming approaches developed, and at least one outreach and dissemination event will be organized in collaboration with strategic partners. Finally, the funding shall facilitate participation in relevant international meetings for stakeholder engagement and ensure that the scientific work of the Authority informs ocean-related global agendas.

E. Communications and outreach activities (programme 3.6)

37. There is a general recognition by members of the Authority of the need for increased communication by the Authority on its work and activities. This should be considered as a priority at such a critical time when public interest in improved communication and access to information is seen as a fundamental element of the negotiation process under development. The overall orientation of programme 3.6 is to support the work of the Authority in fulfilling its responsibilities under the Convention and meet its strategic objectives as identified in the strategic plan of the Authority for 2019–2025.

38. The work conducted by the Authority in developing and implementing tailored communication products has added significant value to its outreach activities. Overall, these efforts have resulted in the increased visibility of the Authority's mandate and programmes, while at the same time improving the clarity and strengthening the credibility of its work. The activities implemented by the Communications Unit help to address the general lack of understanding and misinformation among the public and stakeholders involved in ocean governance with respect to the role and mandate of the Authority. They also contribute significantly to the engagement of all interested stakeholders in the work of the Authority.

39. The main objectives of programme 3.6 are twofold. First, to advance the mission of the Authority by enhancing the visibility, credibility and impact of its activities. Second, to ensure the effective dissemination of information to, and feedback from, its main stakeholders through different avenues. As outlined in its strategic plan, the Authority is committed to ensuring transparency and communicating information about its work in a timely and cost-effective manner by facilitating access to non-confidential information and building a stakeholder communications and consultation platform that facilitates open, meaningful and constructive dialogue, including on stakeholder expectations.

40. The Communications Unit comprises a Communications Specialist (P-4), a Copy Editor (P-2) and a Senior Communications Assistant (GS-7) responsible for overseeing and undertaking all the communications and outreach activities of the Authority. For communications outputs requiring technical skills that fall outside the scope of the Unit, such as web development, videography, digital production and design, the Unit seeks the services of external communications consultants to undertake such tasks.

41. Since 2020, the need for more proactive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders has been repeatedly identified by member States and stakeholders, in particular in the context of the development of the draft regulations on exploitation. Accordingly, the establishment a new position of Stakeholder Engagement Officer

(P-4) is seen as a necessity and instrumental to enable the Authority to meet its growing demands for active engagement with all stakeholders.

42. The priority activities that will be implemented by the Communications Unit during the financial period 2025–2026 will be focused on:

(a) Providing communications services to cover the annual sessions of the Authority, including through the issuance of daily bulletins, photographic coverage, press releases and press briefings;

(b) Contributing to increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area and general deep-sea literacy;

(c) Promoting and partnering with other competent international and regional organizations to raise awareness of the role and functions of the Authority as set out in the Convention and the Agreement, its contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global frameworks that are of particular relevance to its work, such as the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development;

(d) Strengthening the online presence of the Authority by maintaining and continuously upgrading its website, creating strong brands for its projects and initiatives and producing engaging content for its social media channels;

(e) Engaging with the media at different levels to promote the messages of the Authority;

(f) Overseeing the design, layout and production of all the Authority's publications, including technical reports and policy briefs;

(g) Producing and overseeing the production of a range of print and online material to raise awareness of the Authority's initiatives, research and capacity projects, workshops and conferences, including videos, flyers, newsletters, briefing notes, templates and other branded collaterals;

(h) Providing the necessary support to the Secretary-General and staff members involved in international ocean conferences and events.

43. The expected output for the financial period 2025–2026 is to maximize the visibility, credibility and impact of the activities conducted by the Authority. The indicators of achievement will include the following:

(a) Improved awareness and understanding of the Authority's work and impact through communications activities with national, regional and international media;

(b) Improved brand recognition through coordinated communication efforts that are consistent with the corporate identity and increased participation in and presence at relevant events;

(c) Promotion of the mission, work and results of the Authority through collaboration with partners, including by leveraging their communication channels, networks and opportunities;

(d) Improved information to stakeholders and their participation in the work of the Authority.

44. Dedicated resources are required to support the implementation of the work programme and activities of the Communications Unit, in particular as they relate to the maintenance of the Authority's website, development of strategic communication tools and products, branding and outreach activities at the international, regional and national levels.

F. Capacity development and technical cooperation (programme 3.7)

45. The strategic plan for the Authority for the period 2019–2025 includes two strategic directions that relate specifically to capacity-building. Strategic direction 5 focuses on the role of the Authority in ensuring that capacity-building measures are developed and implemented effectively and that they meet the needs of developing States, identified through transparent processes in which such States are fully involved. Strategic direction 6 outlines the important mandate of the Authority to ensure the fully integrated participation of developing States in the activities undertaken in the Area, including landlocked developing countries and geographically disadvantaged States, small island developing States and least developed countries. The capacity development strategy (ISBA/27/A/11) serves to identify five key result areas to address the capacity-building needs identified by developing States members of the Authority and improve the delivery of capacity-building initiatives and programmes implemented by the Authority.

46. The objective of this programme is to build and develop the capacities of the nationals of developing States members of the Authority in a variety of sectors, determined based on the capacity-development priority needs identified by those States. Different but complementary initiatives will continue to be implemented to address the needs identified, in particular with a view to enhancing the participation of women scientists in deep-sea research programmes and responding to the specific challenges and needs identified by least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Specific initiatives will be implemented for Caribbean States and for Indian Ocean States, in addition to the project already implemented for Pacific sponsoring States (Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth) and African States (Africa Deep Seabed Resources project). Dedicated action will also be implemented to advance women's empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research, in particular for women scientists from developing States, including from least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

47. The programme will also enable the organization of two information workshops in partnership with member States to raise awareness and improve the understanding of the Authority's mandate and work as they relate to the interests of national authorities and regional bodies in deep seabed mining. Particular attention will also be given to sponsoring four young professionals or graduates from developing States each year to undertake an internship within the secretariat. The Authority will also organize, in partnership with its members and competent international and regional organizations, two workshops to discuss how to address the respective challenges faced by least developed countries and landlocked developing countries associated with the effective implementation of the legal regime set out in part XI of the Convention and the Agreement.

48. Emphasis will also be placed in 2025 on preparing and organizing an international workshop on the skills of the future to enable nationals of developing States members of the Authority to fully apprehend and anticipate the specific skills and competences that would be required to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the creation of a new labour force associated with the development of the emerging deep seabed minerals industry.

49. Dedicated funding is needed to ensure that the Authority implements its programmatic approach to capacity development and institutional strengthening and that it meets the needs of its members. The funds allocated to programme 3.7 also include support for consultancy fees, the organization of and travel to the workshop and the cost of issuing technical studies and reports.

G. Critical mineral resources and mining technologies (programme 3.8)

50. Programme 3.8 is designed to address the following thematic areas identified in the Agreement as priority tasks of the Authority: (a) monitoring and review of trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities; (b) assessment of available data relating to prospecting and exploration; and (c) monitoring and assessment of available technologies for responsible exploration and exploitation activities with a low environmental impact.

51. The specific objectives of programme 3.8 during the financial period 2025–2026 include:

(a) To compile, synthesize and evaluate current scientific and technical progress for the modelling and assessment of seabed mineral resources;

(b) To support the compilation and dissemination of technological solutions related to prospecting, exploration, potential seabed mining and beneficiation of mineral resources in the Area;

(c) To advance the understanding of members of the Authority and stakeholders of state-of-the-art technologies related to assessing the seabed and its resources, as well as the potential for sustainable exploitation of mineral resources in the Area;

(d) To ensure that geoscientific data and information related to mineral resource assessments are scientifically robust and up-to-date;

(e) To advance the understanding of state-of-the-art seabed technologies, including by developing collaborative initiatives among contractors, scientific communities and other stakeholders to provide an umbrella for technology transfer activities;

(f) To assess the potential contribution of marine minerals to mineral security amid rising demands for critical minerals that are crucial to fostering an inclusive and environmentally sustainable energy transition, with a specific focus on the vital components that power rapidly expanding clean energy technologies.

52. Expected accomplishments include:

(a) An expert workshop on the current innovation and development of technologies relating to seabed mining, effective monitoring and metallurgical processing, and the compatibility of trends for remote and intelligent exploration, exploitation and processing in the land-mining industries;

(b) Knowledge products on advanced digital geoscientific and quantitative assessment and modelling of mineral resources in the Area, including: (i) updates on the existing artificial intelligence-based geological models of polymetallic nodule deposits in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone and other mineral provinces; (ii) an updated artificial intelligence model for polymetallic sulphide deposits along mid-ocean ridge settings; and (iii) an updated artificial intelligence-based resource model of cobalt-rich ferromanganese crust deposits;

(c) An expert workshop on the use, benefits and further development of machine learning processes and programmes in marine sciences with respect to geoscientific and environmental data to support sustainable and low-footprint research, exploration and exploitation activities in the Area;

(d) The compilation of information for technical studies and policy briefs on the demand for critical minerals, decarbonization potential of marine mineral mining, analysis of existing geoscientific data from wider ocean regions in the Area and use

of modern technologies and approaches for the exploration of metalliferous sediments and geothermal energy along mid-ocean ridges and for the oceanography of ocean energy and the ocean environment;

(e) Technical studies on the potential of land mining processes, technologies and resource assessments in developing countries for the benefit of seabed mining.

53. Dedicated funding will be required for the implementation of the programme, for the preparation of workshops, including background documents and other reports on geological, geoscientific and technology-related data by consultants, and for the organization of the above-mentioned workshops, including the participation of experts from developing countries and engagement with stakeholders.

H. 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference (programme 3.9)

54. The third United Nations Ocean Conference will take place in Nice, France, in June 2025, co-hosted by the Governments of France and Costa Rica. The Authority will be expected to support and participate in the Conference, on the same basis as it participated in previous editions thereof in New York (2017) and Lisbon (2022). In those Conferences, the Authority had participated in thematic panels, organized side events and hosted bilateral and regional meetings with representatives of member States and representatives of other United Nation system organizations. It is proposed, for the first time, to allocate a dedicated budget for participation in the Conference, which would include the cost of travel to the Conference for a delegation from the secretariat, as well as the organization of side events and preparation of essential communications products. Proposed costs are based on the actual costs of participation in the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference held in Lisbon.

V. Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit (section 4)

55. The Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit was established in 2020, with the function of overseeing the reporting activities of contractors and managing the workflow between different units of the secretariat and between the secretariat and the Legal and Technical Commission. As the number and complexity of exploration contracts have grown, it has become necessary to increase the capacity of the secretariat to deliver the functions expected of it under the current regulations on exploration and the proposed draft regulations on exploitation. The overall goal of the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit is to be the principal point of contact for contractors through which the secretariat fulfils its specific responsibilities under the Convention, the Agreement and the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority with respect to the supervision and control of activities in the Area.

56. To achieve this goal, the focus of the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit is on implementing the following seven objectives, which are aligned with the relevant strategic directions outlined in the strategic plan of the Authority for 2019–2025:

(a) Effectively manage applications for the approval of plans of work for prospecting, exploration or exploitation, the extension of plans of work for exploration or exploitation and the renunciation of rights;

(b) Provide sound management oversight of active exploration and exploitation contracts;

(c) Enhance contract management practices and transparency through the operationalization of the Seabed Mining Register;

(d) Strengthen the capability of the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit and enhance collaboration with secretariat offices and other partners;

(e) Develop, review and implement standard operating procedures and guidelines that are relevant to the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit;

(f) Provide relevant information and sound advice to the Secretary-General and the Legal and Technical Commission;

(g) Support contractors in the application of relevant rules, regulations and procedures.

57. Following the approval of additional staff positions during the financial period 2023–2024, the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit currently comprises one Chief (P-5), a Quality Assurance and Compliance Officer (P-4), a Contract Management Officer (P-3) and an Administrative Assistant (GS). It is envisaged that one further position of Environmental Audit Officer (P-4) will be required to complement the current staffing establishment. The establishment of this position was envisaged for 2025 in the indicative summary of the post requirements of the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit (see [ISBA/28/FC/2](#) and [ISBA/28/FC/2/Corr.1](#), annex). Considering the need to minimize costs and the unexpected delays in recruiting to the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit in 2023, the Secretary-General proposes to defer the establishment of this post to 2026, with an estimated incremental cost of \$225,000 for 2026 (including recruitment and installation costs).

58. The Environmental Audit Officer will play a pivotal role in carrying out environmental audits of contractors' activities and contribute to enabling the Authority to fulfil its environmental management and monitoring mandate in line with regulatory requirements. These requirements include the anticipated submission of an increased number of environmental impact statements in relation to the testing of mining components or other activities requiring an environmental impact assessment during exploration, as well as potential applications for the approval of plans of work for exploitation after the regulations have been adopted.

59. Non-post costs for the Unit amount to \$290,000 for the financial period and are attributed to the ongoing development of the Seabed Mining Register, annual contractors' meetings and inspections of contractors' activities.

VI. The Enterprise (section V)

60. A separate section for the Enterprise was included in the budget following the approval of a supplementary budget proposal in 2023. The staff of the Enterprise comprise an interim Director General and a Research Associate. The interim Director General is responsible for overseeing the performance of the functions listed under section 2, paragraph 1 (a) to (h), of the annex to the Agreement. The budgetary provision includes staff costs, an allowance for the cost recovery of information technology services and an allowance for travel. No increase is proposed over the supplementary budget approved by the Assembly in 2023. Costs are, however, shown on a full-year basis, whereas the supplementary budget was approved based on costs over a 14-month period.

VII. Scale of assessed contributions

61. In accordance with the Convention and the Agreement, the administrative expenses of the Authority are to be met by assessed contributions of its members until the Authority has sufficient funds from other sources to meet those expenses. This implies a progressive adjustment of the burden of financing the Authority from member States to future revenues from activities in the Area. For the financial period 2025–2026, total revenue (other than assessed contributions of member States) is estimated at \$5,320,000, comprising contractor overhead charges, miscellaneous income and the agreed contribution of the European Union. This means that the total estimated assessed contributions of member States amount to \$21,780,000 for the financial period (\$10,890,000 for each year of the financial period) less any savings from the financial period 2023–2024.

62. It is noted that the contractor overhead charge, which since 1 January 2022 is fixed at \$80,000, was last reviewed by the Committee in 2020.² In deciding to increase the charge, the Council had requested the Committee to conduct an assessment on a regular basis of changes in costs covered from the annual overhead charge and had further requested the Secretary-General to ensure that detailed information on any proposed changes is made available to member States well in advance. Taking these factors into account, the Committee may wish to request the matter of overhead charges to be included in its agenda for 2025, with a view to implementing any proposed increases in 2026 or 2027.

63. The scale of assessments for the Authority shall be based upon the scale used for the regular budget of the United Nations, adjusted for differences in membership, with a maximum assessment rate of 22 per cent and a minimum rate of 0.01 per cent. The most recent scale of assessments for the regular budget of the United Nations was adopted in General Assembly resolution [76/238](#) for the period 2022–2024.

VIII. Budget summary

64. As the Council works towards the adoption of regulations on exploitation of marine minerals in the Area, together with the associated standards and guidelines, the Authority needs to prepare to become an effective regulator of an industrial activity. This will require significant upscaling of present capacities within the organs and bodies of the Authority, including the secretariat. The Authority is also under increasing pressure to deliver on other important elements within its mandate, including the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area, the effective protection of the marine environment from activities in the Area and the need to ensure the integrated participation of developing States in the work of the Authority, as well as capacity-development programmes. All those activities have financial implications.

65. Notwithstanding these pressures, the proposed budget has been maintained as far as possible in line with the principle of zero real growth. No new programmes or activities are proposed, save for a one-off budget provision for the United Nations Ocean Conference in 2025. After inflation is taken into account, the programme budget and conference services budget show a decrease in real terms. Necessary increases in costs are dictated primarily by external factors, in particular revisions to the salary scales, allowances and benefits of staff in the United Nations common system and inflation of the cost of goods and services.

² [ISBA/26/C/28](#).

66. The Finance Committee is invited to recommend that the Council and Assembly:
- (a) Approve the budget for the financial period 2025–2026 in the amount of \$27,100,000, as proposed by the Secretary-General in the annex to the present document;
 - (b) Authorize the Secretary-General to establish the scale of assessments for 2025 and 2026 on the basis of the scale of assessments for the regular budget of the United Nations adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution [76/238](#), taking into account that the maximum assessment rate will be 22 per cent and the minimum rate 0.01 per cent;
 - (c) Also authorize the Secretary-General, for 2025 and 2026, to transfer between sections, subsections and programmes, up to 15 per cent of the amount of each section, subsection or programme;
 - (d) Urge the members of the Authority to pay as soon as possible their assessed contributions to the budget on time and in full.

Annex

Proposed budgetary requirements for the International Seabed Authority for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026

(United States dollars)

<i>Section</i>	<i>Budget line</i>	<i>Approved for 2023–2024</i>	<i>Proposed 2025</i>	<i>Proposed 2026</i>	<i>Total, 2025–2026</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Section 1	Administrative expenditures of the secretariat					
	Established posts	7 930 000	4 700 000	4 750 000	9 450 000	1 520 000
	Common staff costs	3 910 000	2 616 000	2 623 000	5 239 000	1 329 000
	General temporary assistance	41 000	23 000	23 000	46 000	5 000
	Overtime	27 000	15 000	16 000	31 000	4 000
	Consultants (non-programme)	35 000	20 000	19 000	39 000	4 000
	Training	132 000	70 000	75 000	145 000	13 000
	Official travel (non-programme)	200 000	110 000	90 000	200 000	–
	Communications	188 000	94 000	108 000	202 000	14 000
	Library books and supplies	140 000	85 000	84 000	169 000	29 000
	External printing (20 per cent non-programme)	10 000	7 000	7 000	14 000	4 000
	Supplies and materials	125 000	74 000	74 000	148 000	23 000
	Official hospitality	14 000	8 000	9 000	17 000	3 000
	Information technology	122 000	65 000	70 000	135 000	13 000
	Acquisition of equipment and furniture and others	132 000	78 000	85 000	163 000	31 000
	Rental and maintenance of equipment and furniture	43 000	23 000	24 000	47 000	4 000
	United Nations common system	245 000	125 000	130 000	255 000	10 000
	Miscellaneous services and costs	179 000	93 000	105 000	198 000	19 000
	Audit fees	48 000	20 000	22 000	42 000	(6 000)
	Building management	835 000	465 000	496 000	961 000	126 000
	International Public Sector Accounting Standards/enterprise resource planning	57 000	40 000	45 000	85 000	28 000
	Software licences and subscriptions	–	82 000	82 000	164 000	164 000
Total, section 1		14 413 000	8 813 000	8 937 000	17 750 000	3 337 000

<i>Section</i>	<i>Budget line</i>	<i>Approved for 2023–2024</i>	<i>Proposed 2025</i>	<i>Proposed 2026</i>	<i>Total, 2025–2026</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Section 2	Conference services					
	Printing and supplies	2 500	1 000	1 000	2 000	(500)
	Miscellaneous conference service costs	190 000	95 000	95 000	190 000	–
	Rental of Jamaica Conference Centre	160 000	86 000	88 000	174 000	14 000
	Temporary assistance (meetings)	100 000	65 000	65 000	130 000	30 000
	Rental of equipment	57 500	28 000	29 000	57 000	(500)
	Local transportation	13 000	7 000	7 000	14 000	1 000
	Interpretation services	1 460 000	725 000	735 000	1 460 000	–
	Documentation	1 350 000	660 000	700 000	1 360 000	10 000
	Reception	27 000	13 000	13 000	26 000	(1 000)
	Total, section 2	3 360 000	1 680 000	1 733 000	3 413 000	53 000
Section 3	Programme expenditure					
Programme 3.1	Development of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area					
	Consultants	290 000	163 000	163 000	326 000	36 000
	External printing	10 000	5 000	5 000	10 000	–
	Travel	60 000	32 000	33 000	65 000	5 000
	Workshops	140 000	78 000	76 000	154 000	14 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.1	500 000	278 000	277 000	555 000	55 000
Programme 3.2	Protection of the marine environment, including regional environmental management plans					
	Consultants	300 000	162 000	164 000	326 000	26 000
	External printing	20 000	11 000	11 000	22 000	2 000
	Travel	110 000	59 000	60 000	119 000	9 000
	Workshops	250 000	135 000	136 000	271 000	21 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.2	680 000	367 000	371 000	738 000	58 000
Programme 3.4	Data management (resources and environment)					
	Consultants	150 000	81 000	82 000	163 000	13 000
	External printing	10 000	5 000	5 000	10 000	–
	Travel	50 000	27 000	27 000	54 000	4 000

<i>Section</i>	<i>Budget line</i>	<i>Approved for 2023–2024</i>	<i>Proposed 2025</i>	<i>Proposed 2026</i>	<i>Total, 2025–2026</i>	<i>Variance</i>
	Workshops	135 000	73 000	74 000	147 000	12 000
	Information technology	30 000	16 000	16 000	32 000	2 000
	Maintenance and support	150 000	81 000	82 000	163 000	13 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.4	525 000	283 000	286 000	569 000	44 000
Programme 3.5	Promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area					
	Consultants	140 000	76 000	76 000	152 000	12 000
	External printing	16 000	8 500	9 000	17 500	1 500
	Travel	80 000	43 000	44 000	87 000	7 000
	Workshops	150 000	81 000	82 000	163 000	13 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.5	386 000	208 500	211 000	419 500	33 500
Programme 3.6	Communications and outreach activities					
	Consultants	124 000	67 000	68 000	135 000	11 000
	External printing	52 000	28 000	28 000	56 000	4 000
	Travel	69 000	37 000	38 000	75 000	6 000
	Workshops	6 000	3 000	3 000	6 000	–
	Equipment	16 000	9 000	8 500	17 500	1 500
	Training	10 000	5 000	5 000	10 000	–
	Subtotal, programme 3.6	277 000	149 000	150 500	299 500	22 500
Programme 3.7	Capacity development and technical cooperation					
	Consultants	35 000	19 000	19 000	38 000	3 000
	External printing	35 000	19 000	19 000	38 000	3 000
	Travel	120 000	65 000	65 000	130 000	10 000
	Workshops	175 000	95 000	95 000	190 000	15 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.7	365 000	198 000	198 000	396 000	31 000
Programme 3.8	Critical mineral resources and mining technologies					
	Consultants	130 000	70 000	71 000	141 000	11 000
	External printing	10 000	5 000	5 000	10 000	–

<i>Section</i>	<i>Budget line</i>	<i>Approved for 2023–2024</i>	<i>Proposed 2025</i>	<i>Proposed 2026</i>	<i>Total, 2025–2026</i>	<i>Variance</i>
	Travel	60 000	32 000	33 000	65 000	5 000
	Workshops	190 000	103 000	104 000	207 000	17 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.8	390 000	210 000	213 000	423 000	33 000
Programme 3.9	2025 United Nations Ocean Conference					
		–	120 000	–	120 000	120 000
	Subtotal, programme 3.9	–	120 000	–	120 000	120 000
Total, section 3		3 123 000	1 813 500	1 706 500	3 520 000	397 000
Section 4	Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit					
	Salaries	766 000	475 000	550 000	1 025 000	259 000
	Common staff costs	363 000	233 000	265 000	498 000	135 000
	Travel	36 000	37 000	37 000	74 000	38 000
	Workshops	30 000	28 000	28 000	56 000	26 000
	Consultants	115 000	68 000	68 000	136 000	21 000
	Equipment and printing	50 000	12 000	12 000	24 000	(26 000)
Total, section 4		1 360 000	853 000	960 000	1 813 000	453 000
Section 5	The Enterprise					
	Staff costs	384 400	266 000	280 000	546 000	161 600
	Information and communications technology	12 000	6 000	7 000	13 000	1 000
	Travel	19 000	20 000	25 000	45 000	26 000
	Support costs	41 540	–	–	–	(41 540)
Total, section 5		456 940	293 000	311 000	604 000	147 060
Total, sections 1 to 5		22 712 940	13 452 500	13 647 500	27 100 000	4 387 060