



Assembly

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

1. The twenty-ninth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston from 29 July to 2 August 2024. On 1 August, in celebration of Emancipation Day in Jamaica, the host country of the Authority, there was no meeting of the Assembly.

I. Adoption of the agenda

2. At its 207th meeting, on 29 July, the Assembly adopted the agenda for its twenty-ninth session ([ISBA/29/A/1](#)).

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

3. At the 207th meeting, Amara Sowa (Sierra Leone), the head of the delegation from which the President of the twenty-eighth session was elected, presided as temporary President pursuant to rule 27 until the election of his successor, as consultations were ongoing among the Eastern European States for their nomination of a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly for its twenty-ninth session.

4. At the same meeting, the representatives of Nauru (Asia-Pacific States), Portugal (Western European and Other States) and the Dominican Republic (Latin American and Caribbean States) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Assembly for the twenty-ninth session.

III. Appointment and report of the Credentials Committee

5. At its 207th meeting, the Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee, consisting of the following members: Brazil, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Switzerland and South Africa.

6. The Credentials Committee met on 31 July and 2 August and elected Carl Grainger (Ireland) as its Chair. The Committee examined the credentials of representatives participating in the twenty-ninth session and the proxy voting documents.



7. At the 213th meeting, on 2 August, the Chair of the Credentials Committee presented the report of the Committee ([ISBA/29/A/10/Rev.1](#)). At the same meeting, the report, with the oral revisions proposed by the Chair of the Committee, was approved by the Assembly. The decision of the Assembly relating to credentials is contained in document [ISBA/29/A/12](#).

IV. Requests for observer status in the Assembly

8. At the 207th 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 Authority, the Assembly considered 16 applications for observer status from the following applicants: Tetiaroa Society; Gujarat National Law University; CSA Ocean Sciences Inc.; Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations/Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales; the Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21; the American Samoa Economic Development Council; the New World Hope Organization; Centre for Community and Oceanic Law; Opes Oceani Foundation, Inc.; the British Institute for International and Comparative Law; the National Oceanography Centre; the Maui Nui Makai Network; the Center for Biological Diversity; Impossible Metals Inc.; the Seafloor Mineral Developers Association; and Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental A.C. The Assembly granted observer status to all applicants except Impossible Metals Inc. and the Seafloor Mineral Developers Association.

V. Fifth edition of the Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research

9. At an informal meeting, on 29 July, the Secretary-General presented the fifth edition of his Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research to Rengaiyan Periasamy (India), a young project scientist at the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research in India, for his significant contribution to understanding and monitoring global deep-sea ecosystems. The Secretary-General expressed his gratitude to the Government of Monaco for its continuing contribution in support of the Award since its inception and welcomed the contribution from Loke CCZ, which had offered a berth on an exploration cruise in 2026.

10. The delegation of Monaco congratulated Mr. Periasamy and reiterated the continued commitment of Monaco to the initiative, as well as to the promotion and encouragement of scientific research in the Area to support the protection and preservation of the marine environment. The representative of India expressed appreciation for the recognition of Mr. Periasamy's efforts and acknowledged the significance of the Award for his future career. The Assembly also congratulated Mr. Periasamy on receiving the Award.

VI. Annual report of the Secretary-General

11. At the 207th meeting, the Secretary-General presented his annual report, submitted in accordance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, comprising an official document ([ISBA/29/A/2](#)) and an illustrated publication entitled *Leading Precautionary and Responsible Governance of the Ocean Global Commons Based on Science, Solidarity and Transparency*. Under the same agenda item, the Secretary-General also reported on the amounts in arrears (see [ISBA/29/A/7](#)) and 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 (see [ISBA/29/A/5](#)).

12. The Secretary-General opened his presentation by welcoming San Marino as the 170th member of the Authority and stressed the increased commitment to the Authority among member States, as confirmed by the growing number of permanent missions accredited to the Authority.

13. During the 208th, 209th, 210th and 211th meetings, from 29 to 31 July, the Assembly conducted a general debate on the reports of the Secretary-General. Two regional groups, 53 members of the Authority and 15 observers made statements, in addition to one joint statement by the Pacific island States. Statements were also made by the President of Palau, Surangel S. Whipps Jr.; the President of Nauru, David Adeang; the Minister of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology and Geo-Hazards, Energy, Environment and Disaster Management of Vanuatu, Ralph Regenvanu; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Sheila Sealy Monteith; the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Sonny Williams; and the Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources of the Bahamas, Vaughn Miller.

14. Several delegations commented on the number of members that had provided information pursuant to article 84 of the Convention and recalled the importance of the establishment of the limits of the continental shelf in determining the geographical scope of the mandate of the Authority.

15. The majority of delegations commended the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report that he had submitted, noting that the report provided a thorough overview of the work carried out by the Authority in line with the strategic directions and associated outputs outlined in the strategic plan and the high-level action plan of the Authority.

16. Most delegations welcomed the increase in the membership of the Authority with the accession of San Marino to the Convention and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (1994 Agreement). They expressed their strong commitment to the integrity of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement as the overarching legal and normative basis for all activities carried out in the marine environment. Many delegations stressed the important role of the Authority in global ocean governance and its role as steward of the Area and its resources. In celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Authority, many delegations highlighted its continuing relevance in ensuring the effective and sustainable administration of the Area and its resources as the common heritage of humankind, while ensuring protection of the marine environment.

17. Delegations noted the progress made by the Council in the development of the draft regulations on exploitation and welcomed the advancements made by the Council on the first reading of the consolidated draft text of the regulations.

18. Several delegations reiterated that contracts for exploitation should not be granted until agreement had been reached on a robust legal regime, including adequate measures for the protection of the marine environment, an inspection mechanism and a system for sharing the benefits from activities in the Area.

19. Many delegations emphasized the Authority's contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that it had already contributed to 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, to Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. Delegations further welcomed the support of the Authority for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the advancements made

under the action plan adopted by the Authority. Several delegations recognized the importance of the global call for action for ensuring the stewardship of the Area and its resources for the benefit of all humanity through deep-sea science, technology and innovation, launched at a side event organized by the Authority and co-sponsored by Argentina and Bangladesh on the margins of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in New York in September 2023, and invited other members of the Authority to join it.

20. Many delegations commended 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. In that regard, many delegations welcomed the report commissioned by the Secretary-General on the contribution of the Authority to the agreement.

21. Some delegations acknowledged with appreciation the Authority's contribution to other global and regional processes, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as its continued productive and positive cooperation with United Nations entities.

22. Several delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring that the legal mandate assigned to different organizations responsible for the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment was respected pursuant to the specific responsibilities recognized by the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and specific regional treaties in order to avoid overlap and enhance coordination among them. At the same time, and without prejudice to the relevant and applicable decision-making processes, some delegations recognized that there was merit in the Authority cooperating with other organizations and frameworks that contributed to global management of the ocean, with a view to ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment.

23. The majority of delegations congratulated Eden Charles on his appointment as interim Director General of the Enterprise. In recognizing the key role played by the Enterprise in the architecture of the Authority, many delegations emphasized its significance in facilitating the participation of developing States in activities in the Area.

24. Some delegations also highlighted the importance of making progress on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission.

25. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the continued contributions from member States and stakeholders to the voluntary trust funds, which are essential for ensuring the full participation and representation of developing States in the meetings of the Authority. Several delegations invited States that were in a position to contribute to such funds to do so.

26. Delegations also called upon member States in arrears with their assessed contributions to pay those arrears as soon as possible and urged the Secretary-General to continue to actively engage with those member States.

27. Delegations welcomed the progress made under the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund with the endorsement of several projects that are in line with the objectives of promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research for the benefit of humankind as a whole and developing the capacities of developing States members of the Authority, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. In the light of the significance of the projects carried out with the financial support of the Fund, including those announced by the Secretary-General to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Authority, delegations encouraged other member States, observers and other stakeholders to donate to the Fund.

28. Most delegations commended the work and efforts invested by the Authority in 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 2023 and June 2024 more than 230 individuals from 62 countries had benefited from at least one capacity-building or capacity development activity implemented by the Authority. Delegations expressed appreciation for the number of trainees in the contractor training programme (139 in the reporting period) and commended those contractors that had pledged to allocate half of their training opportunities to women.

29. Several delegations welcomed the launch of the alumni network of former trainees to serve as a pool of knowledge for developing States. Many delegations also praised the launch of “Deep Dive”, the e-learning platform of the Authority, as a new mechanism to build and develop the capacities of developing States. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the comprehensive programme of lectures available on the platform and encouraged the secretariat to continue to expand the initiative.

30. Several delegations noted with appreciation specific projects implemented to address the specific needs identified by developing States and members of the Authority, in particular the Africa Deep Seabed Resources project jointly implemented by the African Union and the Authority, with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; and the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth implemented jointly by the Authority and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. Some delegations highlighted the need to continue to work on such projects to build and strengthen the capacity of developing member States of the Authority.

31. Other delegations also welcomed the progress made by the International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre in advancing the activities carried out in partnership with the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, which included the deployment of two experts from Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania to the secretariat in 2024.

32. Many delegations commended the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to advancing women’s empowerment and leadership in ocean affairs, including in deep-sea research and through the Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women established in June 2022 through the International Gender Champions network. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the success of the measures taken to promote gender parity among secretariat staff, including by reaching gender parity in senior professional roles.

33. Delegations specifically underscored the significant progress and outcomes of the Women in Deep-Sea Research project as a vital initiative to address the underrepresentation of women in deep-sea science and related disciplines. Many delegations acknowledged the significant advancements made under the “See Her Exceed” programme, the first-ever global mentoring programme aimed at women scientists from developing States and, in particular, those from the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Several delegations requested the secretariat to expand the mentoring networks.

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 in developing States. Several delegations recognized with appreciation the cooperative arrangement between the Authority and the International Hydrographic Organization, as well as the closer relations with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United

Nations Secretariat on matters related to the future entry into force 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. 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.

35. Several delegations noted with appreciation advancements under initiatives and projects such as the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative and the Seabed Mining and Resilience to Experimental impact project.

36. Several delegations expressed satisfaction with the overall achievement of the Authority under each strategic direction despite limited financial and human resources and stressed that it was operating in an inclusive and transparent manner. Some delegations expressed satisfaction with the increased geographical representation in the staff of the secretariat, while others noted that more work needed to be carried out in the context of the transfer of marine technology to developing countries.

37. Some delegations noted with appreciation that an evolutionary approach was being applied to the creation of organs of the Authority and stressed the need to consider the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission.

38. During the consideration of the annual report of the Secretary-General, 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 any plan of work for exploitation. Several delegations stressed the need to ensure that the Convention, as a package deal, was upheld and implemented as a whole. In this context, many delegations also recognized the important role of the Authority in the ocean governance architecture.

VII. Adoption of the extended high-level action plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2025

39. During the twenty-eighth session, the Assembly decided that the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023 would be extended for an additional two years and consequently requested the Secretary-General to review the high-level action plan for 2019–2023 to extend it in line with the extended period. An extended high-level action plan for the period 2019–2025 was proposed for consideration and adoption by the Assembly (see [ISBA/29/A/8](#)). The extension had no bearing on the substance of the plan; adjustments were made only to some time frames identified initially for agreed outputs in the light of progress in the implementation of the relevant action items.

40. At its 214th meeting, on 2 August, the Assembly adopted the extended high-level plan for the Authority for the period 2019–2025, as provided in the annex to document [ISBA/29/A/8](#).

VIII. Periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention

41. During the twenty-eighth session, the Assembly decided to include the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the

Convention as an agenda item for the twenty-ninth session of the Assembly in 2024, with a view to adopting a decision thereon (see [ISBA/28/A/16](#)). The Assembly also requested the Finance Committee to consider and provide recommendations to the Assembly on the budgetary implications pertaining to the undertaking of a second periodic review. Those recommendations are contained in the report of the Finance Committee ([ISBA/29/A/9-ISBA/29/C/20](#)).

42. Divergent views were expressed on the undertaking of a second periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention. Several delegations stressed that the language of article 154 made the review mandatory. Several delegations considered that a review was premature and would place a heavy financial and resource burden on the secretariat while the priority was the adoption of the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. In the light of the circumstances, a call was made for a pragmatic approach, including finding alternative methods using the strategic plan for the Authority.

43. At its 214th meeting, the Assembly decided to defer its consideration of the question of the periodic review to the thirtieth session.

IX. Report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise

44. At its 214th meeting, the Assembly received with appreciation the first report of the newly recruited interim Director General of the Enterprise ([ISBA/29/A/6-ISBA/29/C/12](#)). Delegations supported the ongoing activities and efforts of the interim Director General and emphasized the vital role of the Enterprise in facilitating the participation of developing States in activities in the Area and their access to benefits from such activities. The interim Director General was encouraged to monitor the continuously evolving technology for not only exploitation, but also protection of the marine environment.

X. Adoption of the budget of the Authority

45. At its 211th meeting, on 31 July, the Assembly considered the budget, as proposed by the Secretary-General (see [ISBA/29/A/3/Add.1-ISBA/29/C/11/Add.1](#)) and recommended by the Finance Committee (see [ISBA/29/A/9-ISBA/29/C/20](#)) and the Council (see [ISBA/29/C/21](#)). At the same meeting, the Assembly adopted a decision relating to the budget of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026 (see [ISBA/29/A/11](#)).

XI. General policy of the Authority for the protection and preservation of the marine environment

46. As requested by note verbale dated 19 April 2024 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the Authority, an item entitled “Proposal for a general policy of the Authority for the protection and preservation of the marine environment” was included on the provisional agenda of the twenty-ninth session of the Assembly. A proposal for a general policy on the protection and preservation of the marine environment was submitted by several countries, namely Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Ireland, Palau, Switzerland and Vanuatu (see [ISBA/29/A/4](#)).

47. While recognizing the importance of ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that could be caused by activities in the Area, many delegations raised concerns about the proposed policy in relation to its aim (sustainable use of minerals versus a moratorium), timing, procedure, budgetary

implications, consistency with part XI of the Convention and overlap with other priorities currently pursued by the Council, including the development and adoption of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.

48. At its 214th meeting, the Assembly had not reached a consensus on the proposal and its revisions following a week of consultations. The Assembly decided not to defer consideration of the item to its thirtieth session.

XII. Statement by the President of the Council on the work of the Council during the twenty-ninth session

49. At its 212th meeting, on 31 July, the Assembly took note of the statement of the President of the Council on the work of the Council during the twenty-ninth session ([ISBA/29/C/9](#) and [ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1](#)).

XIII. Election of the Secretary-General

50. The Assembly was invited to elect a Secretary-General from among the two candidates proposed by the Council (see [ISBA/29/C/22](#)). The Assembly decided to proceed with a formal vote for the election pursuant to rules 72 and 73 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

51. The Assembly noted that Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Liberia and Senegal had communicated their wish to exercise their voting rights pursuant to article 184 of the Convention.

52. In the absence of a consensus, the Assembly decided not to authorize those States to exercise their voting rights but requested that the Finance Committee define criteria and a process for the assessment of the conditions to allow the Assembly to exercise its discretionary functions under article 184 of the Convention.

53. At its 213th meeting, on 2 August, the Assembly elected Leticia Carvalho (Brazil) for a four year-term from 1 January 2025 until 31 December 2028 (see [ISBA/29/A/13](#)).

XIV. Election to fill vacancies on the Council, in accordance with article 161, paragraph 3, of the Convention

54. At its 214th meeting, the Assembly adopted a decision relating to the election of 18 members to fill vacancies on the Council for a four-year term from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028 ([ISBA/29/A/14](#)).

XV. Dates of the next session of the Assembly

55. The thirtieth session of the Assembly will be held in Kingston from 21 to 25 July 2025. It will be the turn of the Latin American and Caribbean States group to nominate a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly.