

Proposal by the President of the Council on an additional modality of work, “Friends of the President”

International Seabed Authority

28 March 2025, first part of the thirtieth session.

To advance discussions efficiently, the President proposes to the Council an additional modality of work—an informal "Friends of the President" arrangement. This voluntary initiative would allow delegations interested in a specific topic or a draft regulation to facilitate focused and flexible discussions to refine text and build consensus.

Under this arrangement, Friends of the President would coordinate with interested delegations to develop agreed text on a specific topic or draft regulation for inclusion in the draft regulations by the conclusion of the 30th Session. This arrangement would likely work best on specific topics or draft regulations where there is already some level of agreement, and some further efforts are needed to land on specific language.

The details of this arrangement are as follow:

- Volunteers shall coordinate with delegations with particular interest in a specific topic or a specific draft regulation, with a goal of producing relevant text agreed upon by the group. Volunteers are free to explore various discussion methods, including via intersessional videoconference meetings, written comments, and in-person side meetings during the Session.
- Volunteers shall submit the text agreed upon by the group to the President and the Secretariat by the end of the 30th Session for inclusion in the draft regulations.
- During the reading of the Revised Consolidated Text, upon reaching a draft regulation with text submitted by a volunteer, the volunteer shall take the floor to present the text, after which comments from other delegations shall be invited.
- A volunteer’s substantive work shall be completed once the text is turned around and included in the draft regulations, unless the President requests, and the volunteer in question agrees, to extend this arrangement for another Session.

Interactions with existing working modalities:

- This arrangement does not replace nor preclude other working modalities. It may take place in parallel with other working modalities.
- This arrangement differs from existing working groups in that: (i) the expected deliverables by volunteers are limited only to text to be included in the draft regulations; (ii) a volunteer’s substantive work is completed once the text is included in the draft regulation; (iii) volunteers shall report to the President, and present their text to the Council at the reading of the Revised Consolidated Text.

This approach offers several benefits:

- It provides an additional, flexible pathway for advancing discussions.
- It encourages ownership of the text among delegations.
- It complements, rather than replaces, existing working groups.
- It is voluntary, informal, and time-limited, ensuring efficiency without adding procedural complexities.

Delegations interested in serving as Friends of the President are invited to indicate their interest to the Secretariat at any time from 28 March 2025 or during the intersessional period. A list of volunteers and their respective topics will be made available to all delegations and updated regularly on the Authority's website in the spirit of transparency and inclusivity.

Germany, China, and Belgium's initiative to develop text on Test Mining draft regulations this week is highly commendable. Delegations are encouraged to make similar efforts, including via the above arrangement. This is a valuable opportunity to make tangible progress in areas where common ground already exists.

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