



**Meeting with the representatives of sponsoring States
of exploration contracts with the International Seabed Authority**

Kingston, Jamaica

26 March 2025

STATEMENT

by

Madam Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority,
Leticia Carvalho



Good afternoon, esteemed representatives of Sponsoring States, distinguished guests and colleagues.

It is a pleasure to welcome you today. I thank you for your time and attendance at this important meeting. Since assuming my duties as Secretary-General in January, I have made it a priority to listen carefully, observe thoughtfully and continuously learn from all stakeholders. This gathering reflects that commitment — a commitment to meaningful dialogue, transparency and inclusive multilateralism that lies at the heart of the Authority's mandate.

Today's meeting has a clear and focused purpose: to reaffirm the central role of Sponsoring States in the international governance of the Area and to create a space for shared reflection on the responsibilities, challenges and opportunities we face together. Strengthening partnerships, enhancing regulatory alignment and improving oversight remain our core objectives.

Over the past few days, I have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including contractors. I have heard their concerns about the pace and predictability of our regulatory processes. I recognize these concerns and acknowledge that progress requires all of us to engage in good faith and to work towards a balanced, science-informed consensus.

However, contractors are only one part of the equation. Sponsoring States play an equal, if not more, critical role as they ensure effective oversight, legal compliance and environmental stewardship. These obligations are not abstract principles; they are core requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement.

Your national frameworks must be robust enough to ensure effective control over contractors. Your institutions must be equipped to promote transparency and ensure that exploration and, eventually, exploitation activities align with our shared objectives. I ask you today

- what challenges do you face in fulfilling these obligations?
- what support or coordination from the Authority would enhance your effectiveness?

I want to commend the efforts of China, Belgium and Germany for their cooperation in advancing a proposal to address test mining and pilot mining within the regulatory framework. This is a welcome milestone and a promising model for cross-border collaboration and responsible development.

Your engagement will be critical in building consensus on key issues. I encourage you to actively participate in shaping the path forward.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the upcoming contractors' meeting hosted by India in September, which will provide a further platform for sharing regulatory perspectives and progress.

I also recognize Korea's leadership through the Biobank initiative, as well as China's contributions to training and the development of the regional environmental management plan. These initiatives underscore our shared responsibility to support scientific advancement and capacity-building, especially for developing States and small island developing States, many of whom face significant institutional challenges.

I fully recognize that not all Sponsoring States operate with the same resources or institutional capacities. As Secretary-General, I am committed to working with you to identify specific needs and enhance support through tailored capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and legal assistance. Effective control, transparency and precautionary stewardship are not abstract ideals—they are the foundation of our shared legitimacy.

Let me be clear: the Authority remains firmly committed to the principle of the common heritage of humankind. This principle compels us to act with caution, fairness and accountability to current and future generations. As Sponsoring States, you are stewards of this legacy. Your leadership is essential in setting the tone for responsible investment, high environmental standards and meaningful benefit-sharing.

We must also be honest about the challenges: disparities in regulatory capacity, liability risks and questions of transparency and public accountability. In this regard, I encourage you to consider the formation of a Sponsoring States Dialogue Platform—a space for peer exchange, alignment of practices and joint contributions to the Authority's rulemaking. My office stands ready to support this initiative in any way that would be useful to you.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the work of your contractors in advancing marine scientific research. Their contributions enrich the Authority's collective knowledge and support the ongoing development of regional environmental management plans and environmental thresholds—which are indispensable complements to the Mining Code.

Colleagues, we have a historic opportunity to shape the governance of the deep seabed in a way that reflects balance, ambition and responsibility. I invite each of you to help us build a transparent, effective and equitable system for the stewardship of this global commons.

Thank you once again for your continued leadership, collaboration and dedication. I look forward to our discussions today and our collective efforts moving forward.