



**Thirtieth session of the Council
International Seabed Authority**

Kingston, Jamaica

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STATEMENT

by

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

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Excellencies, distinguished representatives, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address you today at the opening of the thirtieth session of the Council—my first as Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority—at a pivotal moment for our organization.

I warmly welcome you to Kingston and extend special thanks to our host country. Since 1996, Jamaica has provided a home to the Authority, offering unwavering support, fostering collaboration and promoting multilateral dialogue on ocean governance. As a nation deeply connected to the sea, Jamaica understands the importance of sustainability, equitable resource management and marine protection. I deeply appreciate the warm welcome and continued partnership with the Government and people of Jamaica, whose support remains central to our mission.

I am deeply grateful for the trust I received on 2 August 2024, during the twenty-ninth session of the Authority, when I was elected Secretary-General for the period 2025–2028. This election represents the confidence of Member States in my ability to lead the Authority through this transformative period. I am fully committed to ensuring both continuity and adaptability in the face of evolving challenges.

Moreover, I am also proud to acknowledge that my election marks a significant milestone for diversity and inclusivity in global ocean governance. I am the first Latin American, the first scientist and the first oceanographer to hold this position. This reflects the Authority’s commitment to leadership rooted in high-level technical and diplomatic expertise, broader geographic representation and the principle of rotation. It is particularly meaningful that we are starting our thirtieth session in March, a month recognized as Women’s History Month in several countries—a time to celebrate the contributions of women in shaping our world. Standing before you today as the first woman elected Secretary-General of the Authority is a landmark achievement that underscores our collective progress toward greater inclusivity and gender equality.

I am deeply committed to advancing gender equality across all aspects of the Authority's work and empowering women scientists and diplomats globally through our capacity-building initiatives.

Strengthening ocean governance by delivering the mandate of the Authority

This year marks the thirtieth session of the Authority—a milestone that reflects three decades of dedicated work in advancing the stewardship of the Area and its resources. Since its establishment, the Authority has built a robust institutional and legal framework, facilitated deep-sea research and capacity-building and promoted international cooperation to ensure that all share the benefits of the common heritage of humankind. As we look to the future, our task remains critical.

The deep seabed in the areas beyond national jurisdiction—the Area—covers over 54 per cent of our ocean's floor, placing a profound responsibility on the Authority for planetary good governance. Our mandate is clear: to organize and regulate activities in the Area in fulfilment of the Common Heritage Principle on behalf of States Parties and for the benefit of humankind as a whole. This includes several key responsibilities: sustainable resource management, environmental protection, equitable benefit-sharing, promoting and encouraging marine scientific research and disseminating its results. These pillars guide our work to ensure that seabed resources are managed responsibly, equitably and in alignment with the highest scientific and environmental standards.

The Authority must continue to adapt to new challenges, strengthen its governance mechanisms and reinforce the trust of the international community in its ability to regulate deep-sea activities.

As Secretary-General, I remain firmly committed to supporting Member States in maintaining the momentum and advancing the regulatory work mandated by Article 162 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS, which entrusts the Council of the Authority with adopting the necessary rules, regulations and procedures for activities in the Area. The responsibility to deliver a robust, balanced, science-based regulatory framework—ensuring environmental protection and fair benefit-sharing—is shared. It requires sustained engagement, collaboration and a spirit of consensus-building.

The credibility of multilateralism depends on trust. Without trust, we cannot move forward. I am committed to ensuring that transparency, accountability, neutrality and inclusivity remain at the core of our work.

The success of the mandate of the Authority is integral to strengthening ocean governance and maintaining the integrity of a regime carefully crafted to balance interests—one agreed upon by the international community through UNCLOS. Let us not lose sight of the fact that by strengthening the institutions established under UNCLOS, we protect and uphold the entire system.

Ocean diplomacy is at the heart of my approach. The diverse priorities, needs, challenges and aspirations of our Member States and stakeholders must guide informed decision-making that reflects

our shared goals. The Authority must rise to the challenge of a rapidly evolving global landscape. This means engaging with new international goals, treaties and frameworks in a complementary manner while remaining firmly anchored in our mandate under UNCLOS. Achieving this will require strengthening our operational capacity, fostering synergies with international partners and ensuring robust and adaptive governance mechanisms.

As the new Secretary-General of the Authority, I am committed to upholding neutrality and fostering broad, inclusive engagement across all sectors—industry leaders, the Authority’s contractors, NGOs, policymakers, scientists and youth. Together, we must ensure that the Authority embodies the spirit of multilateral cooperation, serving as a model for transparent, inclusive and both mandate-driven and science-based governance.

The active engagement of all Member States is vital. I strongly encourage those who have not yet appointed Permanent Representatives to the Authority to do so.

It is in the interests of all Member States, particularly small island developing States and least developed countries, to be actively engaged in the negotiations. I call on all Members States and stakeholders to commit to supporting the participation of developing countries in the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee and the Assembly by strengthening the Voluntary Trust Fund.

In this regard, I would like to extend a special welcome to two Member States participating for the first time as members of the Council, the executive organ of the Authority. First, Ireland, a member of the Authority since 1996, has actively engaged over the years and will now, for the first time, have its voice heard as a member of the Council. And, secondly, the United Republic of Tanzania, a member of the Authority since 1997. A warm welcome and my appreciation for your commitment.

I look forward to working with all delegations as we advance the important work of the Authority.

Transition period and early engagement

As I stand before you today, I want to take a moment to reflect on the early days of this administration and the transition period that laid the foundation for the work ahead.

The months from January to March 2025 were defined by this transition. Before formally assuming office, certain constraints limited my ability to be as active as I wished. However, I was committed to ensuring a structured, thoughtful transition that fostered continuity and stability for the Authority.

I took early steps to engage, consult and prepare for the challenges ahead. While hurdles arose along the way, I worked to provide clarity on the transition process and my initial priorities. I issued an Aide-Memoire on 3 January 2025, outlining key areas that required attention to facilitate a smooth handover. This document reinforced my commitment to institutional stability, good governance and transparency, ensuring that the Authority remained fully operational and well-prepared for this new chapter.

Although the nature of the transition limited my presence and activity in those early months, I made it a priority to listen, assess and lay the groundwork for an effective administration.

Despite the challenges, the support from Member States, combined with the professionalism and dedication of the staff of the Authority, has been extraordinary. For this, I am deeply grateful.

Today, I stand before you fully ready to engage, collaborate and move forward with renewed energy and purpose in advancing the work of the Authority.

Overview of my first three months in office

Institutional engagement and international collaboration

Since assuming office in January, my focus has been clear—engagement, collaboration and strengthening multilateral partnerships. The Authority operates in an increasingly connected world and our success depends on the strength of our relationships within the international community.

In my first months as Secretary-General, I undertook a high-level mission to New York, engaging directly with Member States across five United Nations regional groups. During this visit, I held bilateral meetings with 19 countries. I engaged with 11 key United Nations entities, including United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, the Office of Legal Affairs, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly. I also met with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

These discussions reinforced the critical role of the Authority within the broader United Nations system and underscored the importance of strengthening partnerships to advance our shared goals. I am grateful for the support and confidence expressed by Member States and United Nations leadership. I look forward to further deepening these relationships in the months and years ahead.

Beyond the United Nations system, I prioritized regional engagement, holding briefings with the African Small Island Developing States group, the Caribbean Community and the Pacific Small Island Developing States group. I also consulted with the Chairs of the African Group, the Least Developed Countries Group and the Landlocked Developing Countries Group. These meetings were not just formalities—they were opportunities to listen, understand priorities and ensure that the work of the Authority remains inclusive and reflective of our global community's diverse perspectives.

My first three months have also been marked by active engagement with stakeholders in Kingston. I have held Council briefings, consultations with Permanent Representatives and discussions with regional groups such as the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the African Group.

A key highlight was my courtesy visit to the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Kamina Johnson-Smith, on 15 January 2025. As the host country of the Authority, Jamaica plays a pivotal role in supporting the institution and fostering a strong environment for multilateral collaboration. I was deeply honoured by the warm welcome extended to my family and me by the Government and people of Jamaica. Minister Johnson-Smith reaffirmed commitment of Jamaica to the Authority and its dedication to ocean protection, sustainable development and ongoing negotiations on mining regulations.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Jamaica for its continued support and hospitality. Strengthening our partnership remains a key priority as we advance our shared vision for sustainable ocean governance and responsible seabed stewardship.

This is just the beginning. The foundation has been set, but the real work lies ahead. As we move forward, my commitment remains steadfast—to lead the Authority with integrity, transparency and a vision built on inclusivity, collaboration and collective progress.

Together, we will ensure that the Authority not only fulfils its mandate but continues to grow as a leader in global ocean governance, serving the interests of all humankind.

Internal administration

The past months have been highly active and productive within the heart of our institution—the Secretariat. The staff and resources of the Authority remain continuously engaged, with preparations for a new session beginning almost immediately after the previous ones conclude. Despite challenges inherited from previous circumstances, we have already implemented necessary changes to enhance the efficiency of the Authority.

We have taken steps to improve internal communication and introduced measures conducive to a more positive and supportive work environment. This includes enhanced maternity facilities, improved workplace comfort and strengthened internal justice mechanisms to uphold institutional accountability. Additionally, we have strengthened our security infrastructure and, through strategic recruitment, expanded the diversity of skills, professional backgrounds and expertise within our staff.

Member States can be assured that all actions taken have fully complied with institutional procedures, imposed no additional financial burden and have been executed with due process and transparency. A comprehensive account of these measures will be provided through institutional mechanisms such as the Secretary-General's Annual Report and other official documents.

Looking ahead, I will continue assessing the Secretariat's administrative, financial and internal operations, including audits and independent evaluations. Based on this informed analysis, further structural adjustments may be introduced, ensuring alignment with my legal prerogatives under

UNCLOS as Chief Administrative Officer and establishing best practices for newly appointed Secretaries-General.

I reaffirm my commitment to a balanced approach in staffing decisions, ensuring

- careful consideration of all interests
- broad representation among Member States
- selection based on qualifications and expertise
- upholding the independence of international civil servants.

In terms of representation, I am pleased to note that within just a few months, the participation of African nationals within the Authority has increased from 14 per cent in 2024 to 19 per cent in 2025, while the representation of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has grown from 24 per cent to 29 per cent.

Our ultimate goal is to enhance the efficiency of the Authority, ensuring it remains well-equipped to fulfil its mandate effectively.

The thirtieth session of the Council

The twenty-ninth session of the Council of the Authority, held in March and July 2024, marked a significant milestone in the development of the Exploitation regulations for mineral resources in the Area. For the first time, the entire consolidated draft was reviewed in a structured manner rather than addressing scattered provisions separately. This approach facilitated extensive negotiations, improved the identification of structural and substantive coherence issues, streamlined requirements and highlighted key areas requiring further negotiation. These efforts set the stage for continued deliberations in 2025.

Progress continued during the intersessional period. Member States and stakeholders continued refining the consolidated text through detailed written submissions and targeted technical consultations. By the time of the thirtieth session, Member States will be well-positioned to address outstanding provisions and advance towards a robust regulatory framework for deep-sea mineral resource exploitation, according to the roadmap of the Council.

As part of this effort, the Secretariat has diligently integrated the revised consolidated text of the draft exploitation regulations and associated documents, as released by the President of the Council in November 2024. Additionally, all necessary documents have been issued in advance to facilitate timely preparation for this session.

In the spirit of inclusivity, I have consulted with the President and Vice-Presidents of the Council while drafting the provisional agenda to ensure a more representative approach. Another step in this direction has been the provision of key documents in multiple languages, enhancing accessibility and engagement

for all Member States. Moving forward, we will continue exploring ways to strengthen inclusivity further, recognizing that diverse perspectives enrich our collective efforts.

The thirtieth session provides a crucial opportunity for Member States to bridge differences, build consensus and take decisive steps towards advancing the roadmap of the Council. This will ensure that the regime governing deep-sea mining aligns with the highest standards of environmental protection, equity and sustainability.

I encourage all participants to approach the upcoming deliberations with a forward-looking perspective, bearing in mind the responsibility of the Authority to manage the resources of the deep seabed for the benefit of all humankind. From the outset of the session, I invite delegations to capitalize on the progress achieved thus far, building on previous discussions and advancing with a sense of collective responsibility. The work entrusted to the Council is of profound importance for multilateralism, global ocean governance and the rule of law.

In accordance with Rule 27 of the Rules of Procedure, the current President of the Council has structured discussions to advance the Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. His Briefing note provides guidance on negotiations on the Revised consolidated text during the session. These modalities, consistent with those used during the twenty-ninth session, have proven effective in fostering constructive dialogue and fulfilling the mandate of the Council under UNCLOS, the 1994 Agreement and ISBA/28/C/24, which reaffirmed the commitment of the Council to developing the necessary rules, regulations and procedures.

The Secretariat remains fully prepared to support the acting President, the incoming President and the Council throughout the session. This includes facilitating agreed-upon work modalities, providing logistical and technical support and ensuring access to institutional guidance and necessary resources to implement Member States' decisions.

The success of these efforts hinges on our ability to work efficiently, pragmatically and with mutual respect for differing perspectives. By working together, I am confident that the thirtieth session will mark a significant step in strengthening the framework of the Authority, ensuring it remains fit purpose in an evolving global landscape. This is a unique opportunity to ensure that the final Mining Code reflects the principles of fairness, inclusivity and sustainability that Member States—particularly developing States—have long championed.

Ensuring efficiency, constructive engagement and meaningful progress

As Secretary-General, I remain steadfast in my commitment to fully respecting the functions and prerogatives of each organ, as established by UNCLOS and the Rules of Procedure of the Authority. While Member States must address the substantive aspects of the Council's discussions in accordance with their respective national interests—provided they remain aligned with the legal framework of

UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement—I would like to offer, in my capacity as administrative head of the Authority, some reflections and recommendations on the logistical development of the session.

As part of my responsibility to uphold the principles of efficiency within the Authority, I believe these suggestions can help maximize progress and enable us, within the current structure and available resources of the Secretariat, to achieve our shared objectives for the thirtieth session. I must stress that it is not my intention to interfere in Member States' deliberations but rather to ensure that, under my operational leadership, the session runs smoothly and effectively.

The dedication of all delegations, particularly those from developing States travelling to Kingston for these negotiations, must not be underestimated or squandered.

I appeal to all Member States to maintain a constructive, flexible and solution-oriented spirit, remaining open to understanding the concerns of other delegations. I also encourage all delegations to reach out to the President or the Secretariat for any necessary guidance.

Given the time constraints, it is essential to use the available time judiciously and efficiently, keeping oral statements concise while ensuring that all participants can contribute meaningfully to discussions. As per usual practice, Member States, groups and observers are invited to submit their full statements to upload to the session portal.

The Rules of Procedure allow the President to propose time limits for interventions to enhance efficiency. While I recognize that this may be challenging to implement, I encourage delegations to reflect on the benefits of such a measure, which would allow for greater inclusivity and more effective use of limited meeting time.

In light of the complexity and significance of the agenda items and in keeping with past practice, a smooth and expeditious adoption of the agenda at the opening plenary session is advisable. To facilitate this, during the pre-session week, the Secretariat was available to consult with interested Member States with the aim of

- understanding the expectations and concerns of the delegations
- outlining the proposed approach for the session and each agenda item and
- building bridges to ensure the seamless adoption of the agenda and a swift launch of substantive work.

The Council will proceed with the election of its President and Vice-Presidents, followed by the consideration of the agenda items. Standing items are expected to be addressed in a smooth and timely manner.

As to Item 11—Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area—I strongly encourage delegations to approach these negotiations with a focus on progress, consensus-building and resolution

of outstanding issues wherever possible. In line with the President's suggestions, I urge Member States to remain flexible in employing diverse negotiation modalities as they deem appropriate to facilitate effective deliberations.

These recommendations are offered solely for guidance and facilitation. They are not intended to prejudge, influence or limit the positions, approaches or negotiations that Member States may wish to pursue. The Secretariat remains fully neutral and impartial, committed to respecting the sovereign decision-making processes of delegations and the established procedures of the organs of the Authority.

As we embark on this important session, my priority is to support Member States in navigating the complexities of this stage of negotiations while fostering an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and meaningful progress. Together, we have the opportunity to deliver tangible outcomes that reinforce the role of the Authority as a trusted, effective and forward-looking institution capable of addressing the challenges of today and the expectations of future generations.

Expected outcomes and the path forward

It is essential to reiterate that this is a Member States-driven process, with the Council defining its roadmap, commitments and decisions. As an organ of the Authority, the Secretariat, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, is entrusted with ensuring that the administrative machinery of the Authority functions efficiently and that all processes are conducted in full compliance with the legal framework governing the Authority and the Area. This includes adherence to the rules and regulations established by Member States, as well as the implementation of the commitments and decisions taken by its governing bodies.

In line with this mandate, my role is to work diligently to support the Authority in achieving its foundational objectives—objectives that are both unique and of profound global significance. It is my sincere hope that, with the strong support of Member States and the broader international community, including civil society, the Authority can fully realize the purpose for which it was created. This requires that discussions within its executive body—where decisions of utmost importance to the institution and the governance of the seabed are made—be conducted in a harmonious, constructive and collaborative environment. It is in such an atmosphere that the goals and commitments set by Member States can be successfully fulfilled, delivering outcomes that serve the collective interest of all parties involved.

Both within this Council and at the Assembly of the Authority, Member States have repeatedly and unequivocally reaffirmed the necessity of adopting a rigorous, comprehensive and high-standard regulatory framework before any transition to a phase where seabed exploitation can take place. There is a shared expectation that these regulations must be legally robust, environmentally sound and aligned with best international practices. The ongoing efforts of the Council to shape a regulatory regime that ensures legal certainty, environmental protection, sustainable resource use and equitable benefit-sharing represents a key anticipated outcome of this process.

By the conclusion of the first part of the thirtieth session, Member States should have made significant progress in refining the regulatory text, addressing and resolving key outstanding issues and laying the groundwork for the second part of the session in July 2025.

By the end of the thirtieth session, the Council should have made substantial progress towards equipping the Authority with the fundamental regulations necessary to fulfil its mandate.

Finally, as has been the established practice, it is expected that the Council will provide guidance on the next steps in the process, including the revision and adoption of an updated roadmap or timeline to outline the way forward, if necessary. The determination of these next steps rests with Member States. The Secretariat stands ready to facilitate the process as required.

Looking ahead: a responsible and sustainable future for deep-sea mining

In a world of increasing demand for minerals—and with some countries already planning seabed mining activities in the national waters—it is the duty of Member States to finalize the legislation for the extraction of mineral resources in the Area, as foreseen in UNCLOS.

The growing demand for minerals, particularly in the context of the energy transition, is also shaping geopolitical discussions, with countries seeking to secure a stable and reliable supply of minerals.

Effective global ocean governance requires robust multilateralism—one that ensures equal and fair benefit-sharing. In this regard, the role of the Authority as the intergovernmental regulator of deep-sea mining is critical.

Anchored in these principles and values, together, we can build a stronger Authority, one that fulfils its mandate and inspires confidence in the principles that unite us as a global community.

My goal is to uphold the founding principles of the Authority, fostering both pride and trust in its ability to carry out its essential mission. By embracing the founding spirit of the Authority, we can chart a future that reflects its remarkable legacy and unwavering commitment to the common heritage of humankind.

I want to note that a full version of my statement on the occasion of the thirtieth session is available on the website. I invite you to read it and approach me with any comments.

I extend my deepest appreciation for your commitment and dedication thus far. I wish you all productive deliberations in the days ahead, reaffirming the original spirit of compromise that led to the creation of the Authority—one driven by the shared responsibility to steward a common good essential for life.

Thank you very much.