

Assembly of the ISA - 31st Session

Agenda Item 9 – Annual Report of the Secretary-General

Statement by Portugal

Thank you, Mr. President.

We would like to begin by warmly welcoming Cambodia and Kyrgyzstan as the newest members of the International Seabed Authority. Their accession further strengthens the multilateral governance framework established by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

Portugal thanks Madam Secretary-General, Ms. Letizia Carvalho, for her comprehensive report reflecting the immense work done during the past year. We particularly commend Madam Secretary General, and express our strong support, for her efforts to strengthen, uphold and affirm the exclusive mandate of the Authority as defined by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

That mandate is unambiguous: to regulate activities in the Area and to ensure the protection of its marine environment, in accordance with the foundational principle that the Area and its resources constitute the common heritage of humankind.

This principle has a concrete meaning. The deep seabed belongs to no State and to no private interest. Its benefits must be shared with the whole of humanity — not captured by a few — and the Area must be preserved for the generations that will come after us.

Mr. President,

Member States bear a direct responsibility: to provide the Authority with the means to exercise its mandate in an effective manner. In Portugal's view, **this requires our focus in three things:**

First, concluding a mining code that genuinely lives up to those founding principles. A mining code that ensures no activity will be authorized if it risks causing harm to the marine environment. A mining code whose benefits are not concentrated in the hands of a few, today, at the expense of the many and of our collective future.

Second, developing independent science to ground and inform decisions. The deep seabed remains one of the least known environments on our planet. We do not yet fully understand its ecosystems, its biodiversity, or its role in the Earth's climate and future. Expanding that knowledge is a precondition for any responsible decision-making in the Area. Investment in deep-sea science must go hand in hand with the development of the regulatory framework.

Third, a strong institution, with a supportive and united membership, and equipped with the capacity to responsibly monitor compliance and to enforce the rules it sets. Member states must ensure the Authority has the institutional, technical, and financial means to fulfill this function credibly as well as to support its role, not only with words but through their actions.

Mr. President

Portugal is committed to do its part.

Our delegation remains fully engaged in the negotiations of the exploitation regulations, as a member of the Council in 2025, contributing to the adoption and the implementation of a thematic approach, as well as cofacilitator, with Singapore, of the working group on rights and interests of coastal States.

Portugal contributes to the work of the LTC by financially supporting the participation of one of its members since 2012. We are pleased to recall Portugal's regular contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for participation of developing country representatives in the meetings of the Council of the Authority, as well as its contributions to the ISA Partnership Fund, which supports scientific research projects relating to the Area.

For the past three years, Portugal, in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Oceano Azul Foundation, as offered developing countries, with a particular focus on SIDS, a program on ocean governance including the seabed.

Furthermore, in full coherence with our call for a precautionary approach to deep-seabed mining in the Area, Portugal has adopted a moratorium on deep-seabed mining activities within areas under its national jurisdiction.

To conclude, Portugal strongly supports the Authority and its Secretary-General, and calls on all Member States to keep unity around this institution that is a core pillar of the Convention and the legal framework within which all activities in the ocean must be carried out.

I thank you, Mr President