

**The Assembly of the Thirty-first Session
of the International Seabed Authority
Kingston, July 2026**

Agenda Item 9: Annual Report of the Secretary-General

Statement of Japan

Japan would like to express its sincere appreciation to Madam Secretary-General Leticia Carvalho for her comprehensive report regarding activities undertaken by the Authority.

As we have seen in the past few years, the Authority is facing its greatest challenge since its establishment. Whilst we have yet to fulfil our obligation under UNCLOS to finalize the exploitation regulations, global interest in and demand for mineral resources continue to grow, leading to a variety of recent developments which have been discussed at this year's Council and Assembly meetings.

In this regard, Japan would like to reaffirm our shared recognition that the Area and its resources are the common heritage of mankind and activities in the Area shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole. It should be recalled that the Authority was established under UNCLOS as the international regime vested with a crucial role to organize and control activities in the Area, in accordance with the relevant provisions of UNCLOS, and the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority.

In order for the Authority to organize and control these activities, regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area are indispensable. The adoption of the said regulations is a clear requirement under UNCLOS and must remain the highest priority for

the Authority. Such regulations will provide contractors with a foreseeable environment to pursue their exploitation activities within the Authority's framework in accordance with the Convention.

In this regard, Japan has a serious concern about the prolonged delay in finalizing the exploitation regulations. If the Authority merely continues to deliberate on the draft exploitation regulations without producing what is anticipated under the Convention, it would only increase legal uncertainty. States Parties should consider what the consequence of such a legal vacuum would be for the maritime order based on the rule of law.

In this context, Japan appreciates the leadership of the President of the Council, complemented by dedicated efforts by States Parties, in advancing the deliberation of exploitation regulations. Building on this progress, Japan would like to encourage all States Parties to further strive for consensus-building to achieve the elaboration of exploitation regulations which strike a reasonable balance between the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the exploitation of mineral resources of the Area.

Furthermore, as critical minerals continue to gain importance on the global stage, expectations for marine-sourced minerals have become higher than ever, and the Authority's role is becoming increasingly vital in the context of resource security as well. From that point of view, the swift adoption of the regulations is an urgent necessity, and we cannot afford to prolong these discussions indefinitely.

The importance of the protection and preservation of the marine environment can never be over-emphasized. Japan has been at the forefront of developing new technologies to minimize environmental impacts even when operating at depths as great as 6000 meters. In order

to achieve both environmental protection and sustainable use of resources of the Area, Japan reaffirms its commitment to continue playing a leading role in advancing scientific knowledge and technologies to this end.

In closing, Japan reaffirms its continued commitment to the activities of the Authority for the maintenance and development of the maritime order based on UNCLOS.

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