

International Seabed Authority - 31st Session of the Assembly
Agenda item 9 - Annual report of the Secretary-General under article 166,
paragraph 4, of the Convention.

Statement of the delegation of Sri Lanka

Thank you Mr. President.

Excellencies,
High-level representatives of delegations,
Colleagues,

I extend congratulations, Mr President, on your appointment, and thank you for your stewardship of this session. Sri Lanka assures its fullest support to you and the Vice Presidents.

President,

We are pleased to note the accreditation of Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority in November 2025, which signifies the importance that the Government of Sri Lanka places on strengthening our engagement with the Authority and in matters relating to the Area. It reaffirms the country's longstanding commitment to the sustainable use and protection of ocean resources, grounded in multilateral cooperation.

Sri Lanka ratified the BBNJ Agreement, becoming a State Party and reaffirming our commitment to safeguarding the oceans as a common heritage of humankind for present and future generations. We look forward to the further operationalization of the Agreement, complementing the ISA processes.

Sri Lanka reaffirms our commitment to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and recognizes it as the comprehensive legal framework governing all activities in the oceans and seas. We further underscore the International Seabed Authority's exclusive mandate under Part XI of the UNCLOS.

We extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the annual report presented to the Assembly under Article 166 of the Convention.

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Sri Lanka is an island nation. Surrounded by the ocean, we are sustained by our close connection to the marine environment and its ecosystems. Sri Lanka recognizes that the

deep seabed remains one of the least understood ecosystems on our planet. Uncertainties remain regarding the potential environmental impacts of activities in the Area; therefore it is imperative that scientific knowledge continue to evolve.

At the national level, Sri Lanka's National Mineral Policy recognizes the potential of offshore mineral resources while affirming that any future exploration or extraction must be guided by the principles of sustainable development and sound environmental stewardship.

Sri Lanka underscores the importance of capacity building, scientific cooperation and meaningful technology transfer, to ensure that all States, especially developing countries, are able to participate and contribute meaningfully to environmental protection and ocean governance. In line with the 1994 Agreement, we further highlight the importance of ensuring that activities in the Area benefit humankind as a whole. Equitable access to the benefits derived from the Area, the protection of marine biodiversity, and the integrity of multilateral decision-making must remain central to the work of the Authority.

I also wish to state that Sri Lanka submitted its claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in May 2009, and the CLCS is yet to issue its recommendations on Sri Lanka's submission. Sri Lanka supports the activities of the ISA in the high seas, without prejudice to Sri Lanka's submission to the CLCS.

The governance of activities in the Area presents an increasingly important challenge as interest in deep-sea mineral resources continues to grow. Without strong environmental safeguards, such activities could pose significant risks to fragile and still poorly understood marine ecosystems. A fair, transparent and sustainable approach is therefore essential.

In this regard, Sri Lanka continues to advocate a precautionary approach, supported by the best available scientific evidence, underpinned by strong environmental safeguards and a robust, science-based regulatory framework. The development of any regulatory framework for activities in the Area should be transparent, science-based, effective, and capable of ensuring the long-term protection of the marine environment, consistent with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

President,

Sri Lanka remains firmly committed to multilateralism and to the effective functioning of the Authority. We will continue to engage constructively with all Member States to ensure that the Authority faithfully discharges the mandate entrusted to it by the Convention, balancing the sustainable use of seabed resources with the paramount obligation to protect the marine environment for present and future generations.

I thank you. (ENDS)

