Statement by

Ms. Michelle Walker, Deputy Solicitor General, Attorney General's Chambers and Deputy Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the International Seabed Authority during 31st Session of the ISA Assembly, Part II

29th July 2026

Agenda Item 12: The Report of the Finance Committee

Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation would like to commend the Finance Committee for its diligent work, its comprehensive report, and for the clarity of its recommendations. We also thank the Chair of the Finance Committee for the through presentation of the report today.

The Committee's report reflects both successes and challenges in the Authority's financial management.

On the positive side, we note the Secretariat's prudent execution of the 2025 budget, with overall expenditure below approved appropriations, and commend the Secretariat's cost-saving measures in conference services and interpretation.

At the same time, the Committee has identified several areas of concern including the significant unspent programme resources amounting to US$704,593 in 2025 which underscore the need for timely implementation of approved activities. Questions were raised regarding transfers between budget lines exceeding the 15 per cent threshold, and the Committee has correctly urged strict compliance with this rule[1].

Jamaica notes that concerns also persist regarding the Secretariat's transparency in staff-related expenditures, including provisions for pending litigation, and the supports the view that there is need for clearer and more transparent reporting on reclassification and temporary appointments. This is critical in maintaining the trust of Member States.

[1] Paragraph 7, page 1 of ISBA/31/A/10-ISBA/31/C/28.

My delegation has noted the Committee's discussion in paragraph 9 of its report regarding the 19 proceedings initiated by former staff of the Authority dismissed in January 2025. We recognize that these matters carry both financial, legal and institutional implications for the Authority, and we underscore the importance of their careful management in line with international administrative standards in order to manage future liabilities of the Authority.

We observe that the Secretariat has provisioned an annual sum of US$150,000. However, in light of the 19 cases currently pending and recent decision of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal (UNAT), Jamaica shares the Committee's concern that this allocation may not be adequate. It is essential that the Authority's financial planning reflects the true extent of its liabilities, so as to avoid unforeseen budgetary shortfalls.

My delegation reiterates the importance of transparency and accountability in financial management which are not merely administrative concerns but are fundamental to the Authority's legitimacy. In this regard, Jamaica has concerns about the lacks of regard for the Assembly's oversight role as highlighted in the intervention by the distinguished representative of Singapore. We look forward to the explanation by Legal Counsel for this action.

We therefore support the Committee's recommendation for a dedicated budget line to be established for these expenditures. Placing such costs within "common staff costs" obscures their nature and undermines Member States' ability to exercise effective oversight. A separate line item will ensure clarity, strengthen accountability, and reinforce confidence in the Authority's fiscal management.

Mr. President,

Jamaica takes note of the Committee’s report on the status of contributions and related matters. We recognize the Secretariat’s continued efforts to improve collection through reminders and direct engagement, and we commend these initiatives.

At the same time, my delegation is concerned that, as of mid-June 2026, nearly three and a half million dollars in assessed contributions remain outstanding for the current financial period, with additional arrears dating back as far as 1998.

This situation places an undue burden on those states that do meet their obligations. For developing states, in particular small island developing states, predictable financing is essential to ensure full participation and the effective functioning of the Authority.

Jamaica therefore supports strengthened outreach through the Liaison Office in New York and Permanent Missions, and reiterates that timely payment of assessed contributions is fundamental to the Authority’s credibility and sustainability.

Mr. President,

The recurring overdraft position of the Voluntary Trust Fund for participation of developing States is particularly troubling, as it directly affects the ability of our colleagues to contribute fully to the work of the Authority. Without adequate replenishment, the voices of developing countries risk being diminished in precisely those forums where decisions most affect our national interests.

Likewise, the development of the Common Heritage Fund, as discussed by the Committee, must be guided by principles of equity and sustainability, ensuring that benefits from activities in the Area are shared in ways that support capacity-building, marine scientific research, and the sustainable development priorities of SIDS.

In addition, we endorse the position that the discussion of a framework for establishment the Common Heritage Fund is without prejudice to subsequent discussions on other mechanisms for the equitable sharing of benefits.

Mr. President,

Jamaica notes the Committee's consideration of the accounting treatment of transfers from the Endowment Fund. We emphasize the importance of ensuring that Assembly decisions provide clear authority for multi-year transfers and related accounting arrangements.

We are mindful that the current authorization of $400,000 annually from 2022 to 2026 is nearing its conclusion, and a decision must be taken on whether to continue this mechanism. Transparency and accountability in the management of the Endowment Fund and the Partnership Fund are essential, particularly given their role in supporting marine scientific research and capacity-building.

Jamaica therefore supports the Committee's request for systematic and detailed reporting on the use of all funds, so that member states can exercise effective oversight and safeguard the sustainability of these financial mechanisms.

Mr. President,

On the proposed budget of the Authority for the financial period 2027 –2028[2], my delegation recognizes that the Authority is entering a more operational and implementation-oriented phase, particularly in preparing for the exploitation regulatory framework. At the same time, we underscore the importance of fiscal discipline and transparency in this transition.

We note that the Committee, after careful review, recommended a revised budget of thirty million seven hundred and one thousand five hundred dollars, reduced from the initial proposal of nearly thirty-eight million. Jamaica views this adjustment as a demonstration of prudent financial management, ensuring that resources are aligned with genuine institutional needs while safeguarding the sustainability of member states' contributions.

Equally important are the concerns raised regarding staffing and post management. Jamaica recalls that the Assembly had endorsed the Finance Committee's recommendation that no reclassification, redeployment, or establishment of posts should occur without prior approval. We are deeply concerned by indications that this requirement has not been adhered to, and we emphasize that strict compliance with Assembly authority is essential to maintaining confidence in the Secretariat's administration.

We also note with regret the absence of the usual virtual exchanges between the Secretariat and the Finance Committee prior to its in-person meeting. Open and

[2] Part XI, page 5

transparent communication is vital to effective oversight, and Jamaica joins others in urging that these exchanges be reinstated.

Finally, Mr. President,

Jamaica has taken careful note of the Committee's observations concerning its role and functions, as highlighted in Section B, paragraphs 49 and 50 of its report. In this vein, my delegation supports the Finance Committee's reaffirmation of its independence under the 1994 Agreement, and we underscore our collective responsibility to respect and safeguard that independence.

We also take note of the Committee's view that more frequent meetings—at least five days per budget year—together with enhanced use of webinars, will strengthen its ability to discharge its mandate effectively. In this vein, Jamaica stands ready to support the Committee in fulfilling its responsibilities, and that the Authority's financial governance continues to be transparent and robust.

I thank you.