

Statement Delivered by Her Excellency Deborah Thomas-Felix, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the International Seabed Authority on the Report of the Secretary-General at the Meeting of the 31st Session of the Assembly

Mr. President,

The delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago extends sincere thanks to Her Excellency Leticia Carvalho, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, for her comprehensive and informative report, which provides a valuable overview of the progress achieved during the reporting period.

In response to this report, my delegation wishes to make the following comments:

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its steadfast commitment to the objectives and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention. We remain firmly committed to the effective discharge of the mandate entrusted to the International Seabed Authority as the organization through which States Parties organize and control activities in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

In accordance with Article 157 of the Convention, the Authority occupies a unique position within the international legal order. It is therefore essential that it continues to discharge its functions faithfully within the legal framework established by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, as well as the rules, regulations, procedures and decisions duly adopted by the Council and the Assembly. Respect for this legal framework is fundamental to preserving the legitimacy, credibility and integrity of the Authority and to providing the legal certainty required by all stakeholders.

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the significant progress made towards the development of the draft regulations governing the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. We commend the facilitators of the informal working groups, the Friends of the President groups, the Secretariat and all delegations for their tireless efforts, including throughout the intersessional period, to advance these complex negotiations.

The timely completion of the Mining Code remains of paramount importance. A robust, balanced and workable regulatory framework will provide legal

certainly, promote responsible management of the resources of the Area, facilitate effective environmental protection, and enable the Authority to fulfil its mandate under the Convention.

As the Mining Code approaches completion, equal attention must now be directed towards ensuring that the institutional framework necessary for its implementation is fully operational. In this regard, it is our considered position, that the Economic Planning Commission should be established as soon as practicable so that it can effectively discharge the important responsibilities assigned to it under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. The work of the Commission will be critical in advising on the economic implications of exploitation activities and contributing to the equitable implementation of the common heritage principle.

Mr. President,

One of the remaining matters to be addressed is the establishment of an equitable financial mechanism for the sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area.

In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the ongoing work concerning the proposed Common Heritage Fund. We look forward to constructive discussions on this initiative, which has the potential to give practical effect to Article 140 of the Convention by ensuring that the benefits derived from activities in the Area are shared equitably, with particular consideration for the interests and needs of developing States.

Trinidad and Tobago wishes to underscore the indispensable role played by the Authority's voluntary trust funds in facilitating the effective participation of representatives from developing States in the work of the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee and the Council.

The broad and meaningful participation of developing countries strengthens both the legitimacy and the credibility of the Authority's decision-making processes. We therefore express concern regarding the declining balances of these trust funds and the fact that, in some instances, resources are no longer available to support participation.

We thank those Member States that have generously contributed to these important funds and encourage other States that are in a position to do so to consider making voluntary contributions so that all regions and levels of development continue to be appropriately represented in the work of the Authority.

With respect to exploration contracts, Trinidad and Tobago commends those contractors that have consistently fulfilled their reporting obligations and encourages all contractors to continue to comply fully with their contractual commitments.

We have also taken note of the concerns expressed by contractors regarding the progress towards the completion of the exploitation regulations. We therefore encourage all Member States to continue engaging constructively and in good faith to finalize a comprehensive, balanced and workable Mining Code that provides legal certainty while ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment.

We further express our appreciation to those contractors that have fulfilled their obligations to provide training opportunities and financial support for personnel from developing States. These programmes have made a meaningful contribution to capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and technology transfer.

As the Authority continues to evolve, Trinidad and Tobago also believes that all stakeholders who make a meaningful contribution to the discharge of the Authority's mandate should be afforded appropriate opportunities to engage transparently in its work, consistent with the Convention and the Authority's rules of procedure. Such engagement strengthens inclusiveness, promotes informed decision-making and enhances confidence in the Authority's processes.

We acknowledge the work undertaken by the Interim Director-General of the Enterprise during the reporting period and look forward to commenting further when his report is considered under the relevant agenda item.

We also warmly welcome Kyrgyzstan and Cambodia as new members of the Authority and encourage all States that have not yet become parties to the 1994 Agreement to do so, thereby strengthening the universality of the legal regime established under Part XI of the Convention.

Finally, Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its unwavering commitment to working constructively with all Member States to ensure that the resources of the Area are managed in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, for the benefit of humankind as a whole, including present and future generations.

We remain committed to supporting an Authority that is legally sound, institutionally prepared, environmentally responsible and equipped to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it under the Convention.

Thank you, Mr. President.