U.S. Statement for ISA Assembly

July 2026

Thank you, Mr. President, for the floor, and congratulations on your and all bureau members' elections.

And thank you to Jamaica for its warm reception every year here in Kingston, as well as the ISA Secretariat for its extensive meeting support and to the Secretary-General for her report.

The United States is pleased to address this body and its distinguished delegations to present our position on deep seabed mineral development, our strong record of responsible ocean resource management, and our enduring commitment to being a balanced and supportive actor across the full range of ocean governance priorities – from fisheries to freedom of navigation to environmental stewardship. We remain committed to effective international cooperation and leadership action in transparent, science-based, and measured regulatory practices.

For more than four decades, the United States has maintained a clear and consistent legal position on seabed mining beyond national jurisdiction.

As a non-party to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United States is not bound by Part XI of the Convention or the 1994 Implementing Agreement. We stated this unambiguously at the conclusion of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea, and our practice and public statements have been consistent ever since. The deep seabed mining regime established by the Convention is contractual in character – it does not reflect the customary

international law binding on all States that existed prior to its adoption and that remains unchanged today.

The United States enacted the Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act in 1980, establishing that exploration and recovery of seabed minerals are freedoms of the high seas, subject to a duty of reasonable regard for the interests of other States. We have renewed exploration licenses under this framework since the 1980s. Our domestic framework provides transparent, rigorous environmental standards and has supported responsible oversight and respect for the rights of other States in the exercise of their own high seas freedoms for decades.

U.S. domestic regulations and oversight offer transparent, science-based and risk-proportionate processes, including comprehensive stakeholder engagement, that ensures efficiency, predictability, and competitiveness for private companies while maintaining strong environmental and accountability standards for any activities that may be authorized.

For the United States, responsible seabed mineral development is a strategic national security and economic priority; we view seabed minerals in the broader context of critical mineral supply chain security. Global demand for critical minerals is rising rapidly, and diversified supply chains are necessary for geopolitical and economic stability. Humankind depends on modern technologies. It is prudent that we acknowledge that ocean resources can meet this demand with impacts significantly lower than many land-based alternatives. Responsible extraction of these resources can also provide new and sustained economic opportunities for many nations.

Progress can be achieved by remaining impartial across sectors or interests. Upholding transparency, investing in data collection, engaging stakeholders, and emphasizing predictability – these are characteristics of governance that manages risk without defaulting to an overly precautionary approach that stalls innovation and stewardship. Effective public-private partnerships are central to this effort. The United States supports proactive, evidence-based frameworks, which include environmental safeguards that allow responsible development to move forward.

Multilateral cooperation must deliver functional, accountable regulatory systems. Excessive delay or broad moratoriums carry real risks; they preserve dependence on narrow supply sources and disadvantage responsible governments and private-sector operators. The United States has a direct interest in a transparent and efficient ISA regulatory regime that does not unfairly benefit state-subsidized enterprises. We call for timely completion of fair, science-based, and workable regulations. The United States will continue to engage constructively with ISA processes in our observer capacity, share our extensive resource management expertise, and protect our security and economic interests as a potentially affected coastal State.

We remain concerned about measures, domestic or international, that block companies operating under legitimate national systems, including NOAA's DSHMRA licenses. These actions restrict access to proven technologies, facilities, and partnerships essential for transparent, workable regulation. They undermine responsible development and reinforce concentrated control of emerging mineral markets. Such measures do not advance shared goals; they serve those seeking to monopolize resources and slow the growth of diverse global markets.

The United States brings a long record of responsible ocean stewardship. U.S. agencies administer some of the world's most transparent, science-driven systems for managing offshore resources, and our publicly available data strengthens global understanding of marine ecosystems. We publish proposed development and management actions in the Federal Register and welcome public comment from all. We balance economic growth with conservation, demonstrated by one of the world's largest marine sanctuary systems, covering more than 1.6 million square kilometers. By investing in innovative solutions and partnerships, we strengthen these iconic places to address 21st-century challenges while supporting diverse economic interests, including commerce, tourism, energy, and minerals. These are the models we bring to international cooperation.

As international courts and tribunals have affirmed, continental shelf constitutes the natural prolongation of a coastal State's land territory into and under the sea, and a coastal State has inherent rights with respect to its continental shelf.

The United States has followed the rules in the Convention, specifically those in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Article 76, in determining the extent of its continental shelf in areas beyond 200 nautical miles. In addition to following these rules, the United States continental shelf limits respect its existing continental shelf boundary treaties, including with the Russian Federation.

We recognize that healthy, well-governed ocean areas are a prerequisite for responsible resource development of any kind – and we are committed to both.

Finally, the United States underscores that governance – national, regional, and multilateral – must keep pace with rapid advances in private sector capability,

emerging technologies, and society's accelerating demand for diversified mineral resources. Regulatory effectiveness and operationalization must allow both exploration and exploitation to proceed responsibly; doing so provides the legal and commercial stability, predictability, and transparency necessary for management. Frameworks that lag behind real world progress risk creating instability, limiting innovation, and concentrating market control.

We also emphasize that global market diversity and sustainability are not in conflict with environmental stewardship; they strengthen it. A diverse, well-regulated international marketplace supports responsible practices, reduces environmental pressures elsewhere, and ensures that the benefits of ocean resources are broadly shared. Effective, timely governance is essential to delivering these outcomes and maintaining confidence in the international system.

We are not asking the international community to take our word for it. We are asking you to look at our record – decades of responsible ocean resource management – from fisheries to energy to tourism, rigorous environmental standards, open data sharing, and good-faith engagement across every dimension of ocean governance.

In response to a previous intervention from the delegation of Cuba, we emphasize that the U.S. embargo and related sanctions are legal. It is our sovereign decision to not trade with Cuba.

Furthermore, this ISA Assembly meeting is not an appropriate forum for interventions on bilateral politics. The U.S. delegation will not be addressing this matter further and we encourage all delegations to remain focused on the task at

hand -- specifically, the annual report of the Secretary General and the activities of the ISA.

We look forward to continued cooperation with all States committed to ensuring that the development of deep-sea resources advances pragmatically and with purpose to benefit all humanity – and not those who would monopolize them.

Thank you.