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Workshop on “Interactions between the ISA and BBNJ Agreement bodies and processes”

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Malta statement delivered by H.E. Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations

**Madame Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,**

We are delighted to be celebrating the inaugural International Day of the Deep Seabed on 1 November, recalling the draft decision proposed by Fiji, Jamaica, Singapore and my own country Malta, and subsequently adopted by the ISA Assembly. It is also a great pleasure to join these same countries, in partnership with the International Seabed Authority, in convening this timely workshop, following the 30th anniversary celebrations of the ISA, and ahead of the upcoming entry into force of the BBNJ.

I warmly thank the Authority and our co-organizing partners, Fiji, Jamaica and Singapore, for their vision and commitment in bringing us together to reflect on how the ISA and the BBNJ processes can cooperate constructively under the unifying umbrella of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. And I also thank Singapore for hosting today's event.

To our friends from Jamaica. We are deeply saddened by the loss of life and the destruction caused by the recent hurricane that struck Jamaica. On behalf of Malta, our thoughts and solidarity are with the Government and people of Jamaica, as well as our ISA colleagues, and we hope that all are now safe.

Colleagues, almost six decades ago, Malta's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Arvid Pardo, stood before the General Assembly and spoke words that would shape the future of international law and ocean governance, declaring that the seabed and ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction should be regarded as the “common heritage of mankind” and calling for an effective international regime to manage them.



That visionary appeal, made on 1 November 1967, became a cornerstone principle of UNCLOS, and ultimately led to the creation of the International Seabed Authority, which today stands as the steward of the Area and the guardian of that common heritage on behalf of all humankind. This principle continues to embody Malta's conviction that our ocean is a shared legacy and a shared responsibility.

UNCLOS, often described as "*the Constitution of the Oceans*," remains the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

The ISA and the BBNJ Agreement are two distinct yet complementary pillars of this framework. Both share a common purpose – to conserve and sustainably use the ocean's resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, while ensuring that science, equity, and the rule of law guide our actions. The ISA organizes and controls activities in the Area, and protects the marine environment, while the BBNJ Agreement governs biodiversity conservation in the Area and high seas – therefore, their mandates intersect and reinforce each other. The principle of "*not undermining*" existing institutions must therefore be applied in a way that fosters mutual reinforcement, not fragmentation, of our global ocean governance architecture. For Malta, effective stewardship of the ocean must be guided by science, transparency, and inclusive cooperation.

We commend the ISA's pioneering work on Regional Environmental Management Plans, its Deep Data platform, and its capacity-building initiatives such as the Women in Deep-Sea Research Project and the Deep Dive e-learning platform. These efforts demonstrate how the Authority has evolved into a centre of excellence, transforming knowledge into action for the benefit of present and future generations. By drawing on the ISA's three decades of experience, we can ensure that the BBNJ framework develops on firm, science-based foundations.

As noted by other speakers, areas of potential synergies and coordination between ISA and BBNJ processes include marine environmental protection, environmental impact assessments, capacity-building, marine technology, and data management.



Colleagues, as a small island State in the middle of the Mediterranean, protecting the ocean is a priority for Malta. Malta was among the first cohort of countries to ratify the BBNJ Agreement, is a member of the BBNJ High Ambition Coalition, engages collectively with the European Union in BBNJ processes, engages constructively at the ISA, and is also part of a coalition of now forty Member States calling for a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining. In the words of Pardo, we “live and breathe” through the seas and ocean which surround us.

Malta remains firmly committed to supporting collective action that reflects both the precautionary approach and the common heritage principle. We must continue to pursue policies that protect the deep seabed, marine environment and biodiversity, ensure the sustainable use of ocean resources, and promote equitable benefit-sharing.

As we mark the first International Day of the Deep Seabed, Malta stands ready to work with all partners to ensure that cooperation between the ISA and the BBNJ processes reinforces the rule of law at sea, advances environmental stewardship, and preserves our ocean as the common heritage of humankind for present and future generations.

I now look forward to what should be productive and insightful panel discussions.

Thank you.