



Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority Calls for Rules for the Deep  
Seabed at the UN General Assembly

80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
Agenda Item 75 (a) Oceans and the Law of the Sea

UNHQ, New York, USA  
8 December 2025

STATEMENT

By  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Madam President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, it is an honour to address the General Assembly for the first time as Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority. Nearly one year into my mandate, I welcome this opportunity to report on the Authority's work and to outline the priorities that guide us as custodians of a global common that is to be sustainably used, managed and protected for the benefit for all humankind.
2. I am grateful for the continued support this Assembly has shown for the mandate conferred upon the Authority under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Implementing Agreement. I also acknowledge with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea,

and the close partnership with the Office of Legal Affairs and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

3. I also wish to acknowledge the vital role played by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in upholding the rule of law and ensuring the uniformity, integrity and consistency of UNCLOS through its authoritative interpretation of the Convention. In particular, we value the contribution of the Seabed Disputes Chamber, whose work is essential to the completeness of the regime established for the Area, providing all actors with the jurisdictional avenues necessary to safeguard their rights, fulfil their obligations and be guided by its legal opinion on crucial matters for the implementation of the Part XI and its related rules.

## **II. REAFFIRMING UNCLOS AND THE COMMON HERITAGE OF HUMANKIND**

4. Excellencies, we meet at a moment of profound consequence for the future of ocean governance. The world's oceans are experiencing accelerating pressures: the impacts of climate change, the imperative to safeguard marine biodiversity and the growing demand for resources essential to global development.
5. At the same time, the international community has taken meaningful steps to reinforce the rule of law, including through renewed commitments expressed during ISA sessions in Kingston, Jamaica and Meetings of States Parties here in New York.
6. This year, the international community marked the first International Day of the Deep Seabed, raising awareness for Dr. Arvid Pardo's 1967 call to treat the deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction as the common heritage of humankind — a message of peace, equity and stewardship that remains as relevant today as ever. I also wish to thank the sponsors of this initiative within the Authority, and in particular the facilitators of the Omnibus Resolution on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, for reflecting this important achievement in their proposal this year.

7. Since its adoption, UNCLOS has stood as the cornerstone of multilateral ocean governance. The ISA is one of its clearest expressions — an institution mandated to ensure that the resources of the Area are administered for the benefit of all humankind, with no State or entity claiming or exercising sovereignty over them.
8. This legal order is unequivocal: any unilateral attempt to exploit resources of the Area outside the UNCLOS/ISA framework undermines multilateralism and risks of breaching binding international obligations. Since its inception 30 years ago, and now ISA remains ready to continue to work at these basis with parties and non-parties of the Convention.
9. When concerns arose in March 2025 about potential activities outside the Authority's supervision, I addressed the Council to reaffirm our exclusive mandate and the legal consequences embedded in the common heritage principle. Member States responded with unity and clarity.
10. As the United Nations marks its eightieth anniversary, we are reminded that multilateralism is not an abstraction but a framework that has preserved peace and stability for generations and across multiple challenges. The law of the sea regime embodies this vision.

### **III. PROGRESS ON THE DRAFT EXPLOITATION REGULATIONS**

11. One of the Authority's central tasks remains the completion of the draft exploitation regulations — the Mining Code. During the thirtieth session, States completed the full reading of the revised consolidated text.
12. Decision ISBA/30/C/18 adopted in July 2025 endorsed a thematic approach to resolve the most complex issues and set clear milestones for the next phase of negotiations.

13. A further revised text is being finalized for circulation well ahead of the thirty-first session. This will allow delegations to engage with an updated document supported by the necessary technical materials.
14. The Council's normative process has been transparent, inclusive and guided by broad consensus. The prevailing view is unmistakable: the Mining Code must be completed within the multilateral framework and is a prerequisite for any future commercial activities in the Area.
15. The Council has repeatedly affirmed that there should be no exploitation of deep-sea minerals in the absence of regulations — a principle I have echoed repeatedly: “the deep sea needs rules.” Without them, there are no safeguards. This aligns with the direction expressed in this year's draft General Assembly resolution, which underscores the importance of precaution, effective environmental protection, and science and knowledge-based regulations.
16. Adopting the Mining Code is therefore of existential importance, as has been consistently underscored during today's deliberations of the Assembly.
17. There will then be no race to the bottom, but a balanced, science and knowledge-based framework grounded in consensus.
18. We must also note that the international regulations that are under development through rigorous processes and diverse perspectives will also, ultimately, guide national legislation related to resource use in EEZ's. And it is through this process that we can avoid settling for the lowest common denominator, create a level playing field for all actors, and ensure high standards of environmental protection and transparency, as has been recalled today.

#### **IV. STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

19. In 2025, the Authority made substantial progress in strengthening its institutional architecture.
20. The Council initiated steps to operationalize the Economic Planning Commission, which will assess the economic implications of activities in the Area that might impact land-based mining developing States.
21. Work advanced on a critical mechanism for the distribution of financial benefits, including the development of a Common Heritage Fund to give practical effect to the equity provisions of UNCLOS.
22. The Council also adopted a standardized procedure for Regional Environmental Management Plans, establishing a clear scientific methodology for their development and update.

#### **V. ADVANCING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO DATA**

23. Scientific research remains central to the Authority's mandate.
24. DeepData — the world's most extensive repository of baseline information on deep-sea conditions — expanded considerably and continues to serve as an essential tool for transparency, scientific analysis and evidence-based decision-making; not just for ISA but also for future implementation of BBNJ.
25. The Authority's scientific initiatives directly strengthen environmental protection. Millions of data points now underpin environmental baselines, indicators and regional planning. In the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, nine large areas — nearly two million square kilometres — remain protected from potential future mining, putting sustainability into practice. Knowledge, no less than minerals, is part of the common heritage of humankind.

## **VI. CAPACITY-BUILDING, TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND UNIVERSALITY**

26. Capacity-building and technology transfer are central to the Authority's mandate and to the principle of a level playing field embedded in UNCLOS; a matter underscored this year in the work and resolution of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.
27. In 2024–25, contractors provided more than eighty training opportunities for nationals of developing States — nearly half for women. Over one thousand individuals have been trained since 1994. The ISA also co-organized a high-level seminar with the Global LLDC Group, reinforcing that the opportunities of the ocean must be shared equitably among all nations, including landlocked developing countries.
28. Universality and inclusivity continued to grow. Kyrgyzstan acceded to UNCLOS in 2025, becoming the 170th STATE Party and the 171st member of the Authority. Three States — Belize, Chad and Ecuador — joined the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities. The ISA stands ready to support all States seeking to build their capacity to participate fully in deep-sea governance.

## **VII. THE ISA AND THE BBNJ AGREEMENT**

29. The entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement in early 2026 will be a milestone in global ocean governance. The Authority welcomes this development and stands ready to support its implementation through coherence and coordination.
30. In November 2025, nearly thirty ISA members and international organizations gathered in New York for the first workshop on interactions between the ISA and future BBNJ institutions. A clear message emerged: effective BBNJ implementation

requires structured cooperation with ISA, and the Authority's exclusive mandate must be upheld to avoid duplication.

31. With more than three decades of operational experience and the world's most extensive deep-sea environmental database — the ISA has developed a rigorous, science and knowledge-based governance architecture for activities in the Area. This provides a strong foundation for complementarity with the BBNJ framework.

32. Excellencies, the year ahead will be decisive. Adopting the Mining Code, strengthening institutional arrangements, defining environmental thresholds, preparing monitoring and compliance capacities, and the benefit-sharing mechanism, will require sustained engagement from all delegation.

33. This work is essential to preserve the integrity of the UNCLOS regime. Without a strong regulatory framework, uncertainty grows; equity weakens and confidence in the multilateral system erodes. Let me also highlight that certainty is crucial to driving the innovation and technological advancement that hold keys to avoiding mistakes of the past through honed selectivity, precision and monitoring. Therefore, the task before us is to safeguard a the common heritage through rules that are fit for purpose, based on the precautionary approach, and informed by science and knowledge. We need to reinstate that the adoption of the Mining Code is not a race to mine. It is a guardrail for the noble principles we want to promote.

34. Increased resources are critical for the Authority to fulfil its mandate. Continued support for the Voluntary Trust Funds is vital to ensure broad participation, particularly for developing States.

35. As Secretary-General, my responsibility is to uphold the mandate entrusted to the Authority. Should exploitation occur, it must do so strictly under internationally agreed rules that ensure effective environmental protection and honour our duty to future generations.

36. The Authority will continue working closely with the United Nations and all partners to ensure that the principles of UNCLOS remain a source of legal certainty, stability, and fairness.

## **IX. DRAFT RESOLUTION**

37. Madam President, I wish to acknowledge the forthcoming adoption of this year's General Assembly resolution on "Oceans and the Law of the Sea." The draft text reaffirms the centrality of UNCLOS and the institutions it created, including the Authority. I also wish to express my appreciation for the recognition accorded to the work of the Authority in the Omnibus Resolution, as well as for the steady support demonstrated by the Assembly in today's debate.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

38. Madam President, Excellencies, in a time of global uncertainty, the ocean remains one of the few spaces where cooperation can prevail. The UNCLOS regime proves that multilateral governance of a global common — what none owns, but all rely upon — is both possible and indispensable.

39. For nearly thirty years, States have demonstrated — through the Authority — that governance of the deep seabed can be precautionary, equitable and grounded in science. This is rare in human history, and worth protecting. The Authority will continue to uphold its responsibilities with integrity, transparency and inclusiveness so that the Area remains a realm of cooperation, shared benefit, peace and prosperity.



40. We have the tools: a comprehensive legal framework, a committed international community, increasingly robust science, and technological, inclusive through AI. What we must safeguard is the principle that has guided this regime from the outset: governance must lead activity. If it does not, the risks are real, and embedded in history — fragmentation, unilateral action, inequity, private appropriation and harm to fragile ecosystems.

41. Let us act with the seriousness and stewardship that this mandate requires. Thank you.

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