



# 30<sup>th</sup> Session

## **Selected Decisions and Documents**







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## **Selected Decisions and Documents**

**INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY**

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# Assembly

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## Thirtieth session

Kingston, 21–25 August 2025

Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

**Annual report of the Secretary-General under  
article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention**

## **Report of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted to the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority pursuant to article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It provides information on the work of the Authority for the period from 1 August 2024 to 31 March 2025. It also provides information on the status of the Convention and related legal instruments, the status of the Area, the status of contributions to the budget of the Authority, the status of contracts for exploration in the Area, a summary of the main outcomes of the previous session of the Authority and other noteworthy information. It should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup>

### **II. Membership of the Authority**

2. All States Parties to the Convention are ipso facto members of the Authority.<sup>2</sup> As at 31 March 2025, there were 170 Parties to the Convention (169 States and the European Union), and thus there were 170 members of the Authority. The membership has remained unchanged since San Marino became a Party to the Convention on 19 July 2024. As at 31 March 2025, there were 153 parties to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (1994 Agreement). This almost universal membership has strengthened the Part XI regime over the past 30 years.

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\* ISBA/30/A/L.1.

<sup>1</sup> ISBA/30/A/4.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with article 156, paragraph 2, of the Convention.



3. There are 17 members of the Authority that became Parties to the Convention before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement and have yet to become Parties to it, namely Bahrain, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and the Sudan.

4. As provided under General Assembly resolution [48/263](#) and the 1994 Agreement, the provisions of the latter and of Part XI of the Convention are to be interpreted and applied together as a single instrument. In the event of any inconsistency between the 1994 Agreement and Part XI of the Convention, the provisions of the Agreement shall prevail. Although members of the Authority that are not Parties to the 1994 Agreement participate in the work of the Authority under arrangements based on the Agreement, becoming a Party to the 1994 Agreement would remove any incongruity that currently exists for those States. The Secretary-General encourages those States to become Parties to the 1994 Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity. The secretariat sent a note verbale to each of those States on 7 March 2025.

### III. The Area

5. The Area is defined in the Convention as the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Establishing the exact geographical limits of the Area thus depends on the delineation of the limits of national jurisdiction, including the delineation of the continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea.

6. Pursuant to article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention, coastal States are obliged to give due publicity to charts or lists of geographical coordinates and, in the case of those showing the outer limit lines of the continental shelf, to deposit a copy of each such chart or list with the Secretary-General of the Authority. As at 31 March 2025, 17 members of the Authority had deposited such charts and lists with the Secretary-General, namely Australia, Cabo Verde, the Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, France (with respect to Guadeloupe, French Guiana, the Kerguelen islands, Martinique, New Caledonia, Reunion and the Saint-Paul and Amsterdam islands), Ghana, Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niue, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Senegal and Tuvalu.

7. The Secretary-General urges all coastal States to deposit the charts or lists of coordinates as soon as possible after the establishment of the outer limit lines of their continental shelf, up to and beyond 200 nautical miles, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention. Knowledge of the precise delineation of all areas of the continental shelf up to and beyond 200 nautical miles is critical to allow the establishment of the geographical limits of the Area with certainty. Each year, the secretariat sends out a note verbale requesting the deposit of such charts or lists of coordinates. The last such note was sent out on 29 January 2025.

### IV. Permanent missions to the Authority

8. Between June 2024 and March 2025, eight new permanent representatives were appointed and accredited to the Authority by members with permanent missions to the Authority: Cyprus, India, Italy, Mexico, Nauru, Spain, Zimbabwe and European Union.

9. In addition, between June 2024 and March 2025, the Governments of three member States appointed permanent representatives to the Authority for the first time, thereby establishing permanent missions to the Authority. On 21 June 2024, Harold

Adlai Agyeman was accredited as the first Permanent Representative of Ghana to the Authority. On 27 June 2024, Hussein Athuman Kattanga was accredited as the first Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Authority. On 29 July 2024, Filipo Tarakinikini was accredited as the first Permanent Representative of Fiji to the Authority.

10. As at 31 March 2025, a total of 42 members maintained permanent missions to the Authority: Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Fiji, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Nauru, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe and European Union.

## **V. Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority**

11. The Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority was adopted by the Assembly on 27 March 1998 and entered into force on 31 May 2003. As at 31 March 2025, the total number of Parties to the Protocol remained at 48: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Czechia, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guyana, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay. A further 10 States have signed the Protocol but have yet to ratify it: Bahamas (The), Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Kenya, Malta, Namibia, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

12. Members of the Authority that are not yet Parties to the Protocol are strongly encouraged to take the steps necessary to become Parties to the Protocol at their earliest convenience. The secretariat sent out a note verbale to that effect on 10 February 2025.

## **VI. Administrative matters**

### **A. Secretariat**

13. The secretariat is one of the principal organs of the Authority. In accordance with article 166 of the Convention, the secretariat comprises a Secretary-General and such staff as the Authority may require. The number of established posts in the secretariat as at 31 March 2025 was 56 (33 Professional, 2 National Professional Officer and 21 General Service posts), held by staff of 21 different nationalities. The Secretary-General is committed to maintaining gender parity across the organization: as at 31 March 2025, 57 per cent of secretariat staff members were women.

14. During the reporting period, the secretariat posted 17 job openings and 6 temporary job openings on the Inspira platform, the website of the Authority and social media platforms, attracting a total of 1,363 applicants. The vacant positions are at various stages of the recruitment and onboarding processes. Ten staff members separated from the organization at the expiration of their appointments. Twenty-nine international consultants and 50 local individual contractors were hired to support sessions, programmes and operations.

## **B. Participation in the common system of the United Nations**

15. The Authority applies the common system of salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the United Nations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. It subscribed to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), with effect from January 2013.

16. As a participant in the United Nations common system of organizations, the Authority contributes to and participates in the work of ICSC and utilizes common system services and tools, such as Inspira, for the classification of staff positions, recruitment, reference verification, performance management and mandatory training courses. The Authority also contributes to and uses the services of the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal.

## **VII. Financial matters**

### **A. Budget**

17. At its twenty-ninth session, the Assembly, following the recommendation of the Finance Committee, adopted the budget for the financial period 2025–2026 in the amount of \$26,427,000.<sup>3</sup>

### **B. Status of contributions**

18. In accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the administrative expenses of the Authority are to be met by assessed contributions of its members until the Authority has sufficient funds from other sources to meet its administrative expenses. The scale of assessments for this purpose is based on the scale used for the regular budget of the United Nations, adjusted for differences in membership, with a ceiling assessment rate of 22 per cent and a floor assessment rate of 0.01 per cent.

19. Since 2013, the Authority has also applied a system of cost recovery whereby contractors are required to pay an annual overhead charge representing the cost of services provided to them by the Authority. For the financial period 2025–2026, overhead charges are anticipated to account for approximately 18 per cent of the revenues of the Authority.

20. As at 31 March 2025, 57 per cent of the value of contributions to the 2025 budget due from member States and the European Union had been received. As at the same date, outstanding contributions from member States for prior periods (1998–2024) amounted to \$604,854. Notices are sent regularly to member States, reminding them of the arrears. In accordance with article 184 of the Convention and rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, a member of the Authority that is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions shall have no vote if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of contributions due from it for the preceding two years. As at 31 March 2025, the following 44 members of the Authority had been in arrears for two years or more: Angola, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, North Macedonia, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Saint Kitts

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<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/29/A/11](#).

and Nevis, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen and Zambia.

21. As at 31 March 2025, the balance of the working capital fund stood at \$756,808, against an approved level of \$825,000.

### **C. Voluntary trust fund for members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee**

22. The voluntary trust fund to cover the costs of participation of members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee from developing countries was established in 2002. As at 31 March 2025, the total contributions to the fund over its lifetime amounted to \$1,606,837. During the reporting period, contributions were made by China (\$20,000), France (\$42,977), Ireland (\$21,440), Netherlands (Kingdom of the) (\$47,435) and the Philippines (\$28,547). As at the same date, the balance of the fund was \$17,216.

### **D. Voluntary trust fund for members of the Council**

23. At its twenty-third session in 2017, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary trust fund to support the participation of members of the Council from developing States in the additional meetings of the Council convened to work on the draft regulations for exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, ensuring inclusive participation. During the reporting period, contributions were made by Netherlands (Kingdom of the) (\$31,612) and Portugal (\$10,240). As at 31 March 2025, the total contributions to the fund over its lifetime amounted to \$244,084. As at the same date, the balance of the fund was \$3,071.

### **E. International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund**

24. The International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund was established on 3 August 2022 by the Assembly at its twenty-seventh session. This multi-donor trust fund is aimed at promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of humankind. It is also aimed at contributing to dedicated capacity development programmes and activities aligned with the priority needs identified by developing member States of the Authority. During the reporting period, contributions to the fund were made by China (\$20,000), France (\$21,402), Ireland (\$154,586) and Monaco (\$20,414).

25. The third and fourth meetings of the Board of the Fund were held in July and November 2024, respectively. The Board approved financial support for the following projects: Women in Blue training opportunities in ocean science; From Surface to Depth: Fostering Deep-Sea Literacy in Mozambique's Early Career Ocean Professionals; Women in Science Expedition; a methodology for adaptive management of deep-sea mining sediment plumes; and the MeioScool project in partnership with the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer for enhancing capacity and knowledge-sharing in meiofauna research.

### **F. Trust fund for extrabudgetary support for the Authority**

26. The Authority receives extrabudgetary funds from member States and other donors to support activities not funded by the approved budget of the Authority. These may be one-off contributions or funds to support multi-year programmes or projects,

used in accordance with the terms agreed with the donors, including reporting and audit requirements.

27. In March 2018, the Secretary-General created a multi-donor trust fund for extrabudgetary support for the activities of the Authority. The fund was established pursuant to regulation 5.5 of the Financial Regulations of the Authority and is administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations. Since its creation, the fund has raised \$2,565,178 and had a net balance of \$613,226 as at 31 March 2025. In addition, the European Union contributed \$381,352 to the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative project.

## **VIII. Satya N. Nandan Library**

28. The Satya N. Nandan Library hosts an extensive collection of resources and publications that are pivotal to understanding the legal regime of the Area. It caters to the diverse needs of members, permanent missions and researchers, offering essential support to the secretariat staff. The Library archives and distributes the official documents of the Authority and manages its publications programme. In addition, the Library has established the International Seabed Authority Digital Library (accessible at [www.isa.org.jm/satya-n-nandan-library/](http://www.isa.org.jm/satya-n-nandan-library/)). This repository houses a wealth of documents related to the Convention and publications of the Authority, with over 15,843 full-text files, 2,416 monographs, 5,631 bibliographic records and links to 50 specially curated e-resources. The Library remains committed to optimizing its resources through strategic budget management and engaging in online research, book acquisitions and collaborations with institutional partners. As a member of the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium alongside the Library of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, it streamlines electronic information acquisition, promotes resource management efficiencies and enhances training opportunities.

## **IX. Previous sessions of the Authority**

### **A. Twenty-ninth session**

29. The twenty-ninth session of the Assembly was held in Kingston from 29 July to 2 August 2024. There was no meeting on 1 August owing to the celebration of Emancipation Day in Jamaica, the host country of the Authority. Amara Sowa (Sierra Leone) presided as temporary President. Representatives of the Dominican Republic, Nauru and Portugal and were elected as Vice-Presidents.

30. During the twenty-ninth session, the Assembly considered the annual report of the Secretary-General, submitted in accordance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention. The Assembly approved 14 requests for observer status. It adopted the extended high-level plan for the Authority for the period 2019–2025, in line with the two-year extension of the strategic plan of the Authority to cover the period 2019–2025, which had been decided by the Assembly in July 2024.

31. The Assembly decided to defer to the thirtieth session in July 2025 its consideration of the question of the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention. It received with appreciation the first report of the newly recruited interim Director General of the Enterprise. The Assembly adopted a decision relating to the budget of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026. It decided not to defer to its thirtieth session its consideration of the proposal for a general policy of the Authority for the protection and preservation

of the marine environment. The Assembly took note of the statement of the President of the Council during the twenty-ninth session.

32. The Assembly elected Leticia Carvalho (Brazil) as Secretary-General for a four-year term from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028.

33. The Assembly elected 18 members to fill vacancies on the Council for a four-year term from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028.

34. The twenty-ninth session of the Council was held in two parts: the first part from 18 to 29 March 2024 and the second part from 15 to 26 July 2024.

35. At the first part of the session, the Council elected Olav Myklebust (Norway) as President of the Council. Representatives of Brazil, India and Uganda were elected as Vice-Presidents.

36. The Council continued its work on the draft regulations as a matter of priority, in keeping with the road map endorsed in November 2022 and the Council decision of July 2023. At the first part of the session, the President of the Council presented the consolidated text of the draft regulations, as well as a suspense document, a proposal compilation and a matrix of environmental standards and guidelines.

37. During the first and second parts of the session, the Council conducted the first reading of the consolidated text, made significant progress towards addressing thematic outstanding issues, carried out crucial work in several intersessional working groups, held thematic discussions on specific aspects of the draft regulations, with the support of the Chair of the open-ended working group on the financial terms of contracts, facilitators and rapporteurs, and conducted detailed, textual discussions chaired by the President of the Council on the basis of the consolidated text.

38. During the second part of the session, the Council endorsed a revised road map for the continuation of work on the draft regulations and the associated standards and guidelines at the thirtieth session in 2025.

39. The Council approved the memorandum of understanding between the Authority and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and took note of: a report on the status of the contracts for exploration and periodic reviews of the implementation of plans of work for exploration; a report on cooperation with the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic; and a report on incidents in the NORI-D contract area in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. The Council elected a new member to fill a vacancy on the Legal and Technical Commission. It also took note of: the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its twenty-ninth session; the report on the status of national legislation relating to deep seabed mining and related matters; and the reports on the relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, with the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association and with the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security.

40. Among the agenda items considered at the twenty-ninth session was the approval of the plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides submitted by Earth System Science Organization-Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India. The Council took note of the report of the Legal and Technical Commission relating to an application for approval of a plan of work for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts by Earth System Science Organization-Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India. It also took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2023 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission and of the first report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise. It further took note of the report of the

Finance Committee and adopted a decision relating to the budget of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026 and the scale of assessments for contributions to the budget of the Authority for the same financial period. The Council proposed to the Assembly a list of candidates for the election of the Secretary-General.

## **B. First part of the thirtieth session of the Council**

41. During the first part of the thirtieth session, in March 2025, the Council elected Duncan Muhumuza Laki (Uganda) as the President. Representatives of Brazil, France and Singapore were elected as Vice-Presidents.

42. In line with the revised road map, endorsed by the Council on 26 July 2024 (ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1, annex III) to guide its work during the thirtieth session and the President's briefing note of 28 January 2025, the President of the Council presented the revised consolidated text of the draft regulations and the revised suspense document, both released on 29 November 2024, and the updated compilation of proposals, released on 5 December 2024. The President also suggested working modalities for the first part of the thirtieth session.

43. The Council focused its work on the draft exploitation regulations and made substantial progress, reaching draft regulation 55. Separately, working groups met informally during the morning and lunch breaks. A thematic discussion was conducted on an outstanding conceptual topic. The Council engaged in a high-level discussion on standards and guidelines, as foreseen in the revised road map, using a list of standards and guidelines that had been prepared by the secretariat at the request of some delegations.

44. The Council welcomed a proposal presented by the President of an additional modality of work, namely the establishment of a group of friends of the President. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that the intersessional work would be continued and that, at the following meeting, in July 2025, work would continue with a view to completing the reading of the revised consolidated text and the discussion on the standards and guidelines.

45. The Council considered an item entitled "Further consideration of actions that the Council may take if an application were to be submitted before the Council has completed the rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation", under which a delegation presented an explanatory non-Paper entitled "Proposed procedure for consideration and provisional approval of applications for plans of work for exploitation under paragraph 15 (c) of the 1994 Agreement".

46. The Council approved the deferral of the schedule of the second relinquishment regarding the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides of the Government of India.

47. The Secretary-General informed the Council about the announcement made on 27 March 2025 by The Metals Company that its subsidiary had initiated the process of applying for commercial recovery permits under the United States of America Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act of 1980. Full support was expressed for the exclusive jurisdiction of the Authority and for the development by the Authority of the regulations on exploitation, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.



## **X. Operationalization of the Enterprise**

48. Very significant work continues to be undertaken towards the operationalization of the Enterprise in line with the step-by-step process envisioned in the 1994 Agreement.

49. The Enterprise is the organ of the Authority entrusted with carrying out activities in the Area directly, including the transporting, processing and marketing of minerals recovered from it on behalf of the members of the Authority, subject to the directives and under the control of the Council. Once fully operational, the Enterprise will play a crucial role in facilitating the participation of developing States in mining in the Area, as it will be able to carry out such activities in the reserved areas. Under the 1994 Agreement, the secretariat, through the interim Director General of the Enterprise, carries out some functions of the Enterprise until the Council decides that the Enterprise should function independently.

50. Subsequent to his appointment as interim Director General of the Enterprise in January 2025, Eden Charles has been discharging his mandate in keeping with the provisions of the 1994 Agreement as well as other functions directed by the Council and which fall under the terms of reference of his employment. These include the functions listed under section 2 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, as well as participation in, inter alia: the meetings of the Council as part of the negotiations of the draft regulations, other meetings of the plenary of the Council and working groups established by that body; informal intersessional working groups; bilateral meetings involving stakeholders, including sponsoring States and contractors, at headquarters and externally; and meetings of the Assembly. Mr. Charles presented his first report to the Council and the Assembly during the twenty-ninth session of the Authority.<sup>4</sup>

51. Based at the headquarters of the Authority, the interim Director General reports administratively to the Secretary-General while being accountable to both the Council and the Assembly. The interim Director General will present his second report to the Council and the Assembly during the thirtieth session of the Authority, in July 2025.

## **XI. Prospecting and status of contracts for exploration**

52. With reference to prospecting conducted by Argeo Survey AS (Argeo) in April 2023 at the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, pursuant to regulation 4 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area, the Legal and Technical Commission took note of the 2024 annual report submitted by Argeo during the first part of its thirtieth session. All data collected were provided to the Authority. No additional surveys were conducted by Argeo in 2024.

53. As at 31 March 2025, 30 contracts for exploration were in force (19 for polymetallic nodules, 7 for polymetallic sulphides and 4 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts). Each contractor is required to submit an annual report to the Secretary-General by no later than 31 March each year. The report covers its programme of activities under the contract. For the year 2024, 30 annual reports in relation to 30 exploration contracts have been received by the secretariat. In fulfilment of their obligation to provide and fund training programmes, contractors provided 83 new training opportunities during the reporting period.

54. Contractors are also required to submit five-year periodic reports on their activities. Between July 2024 and April 2025, five periodic review reports were submitted by Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation (contract for

<sup>4</sup> [ISBA/29/A/6-ISBA/29/C/12](#).

exploration of polymetallic nodules), Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (contract for exploration of polymetallic sulphides), Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd. (contract for exploration of polymetallic nodules), Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd. (contract for exploration of polymetallic nodules) and Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (contract for exploration of polymetallic sulphides). These periodic reports are under evaluation, with an anticipated completion date of July 2025.

55. During the reporting period, the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit of the secretariat conducted two inspections. The first inspection was conducted for Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd. to assess the contractor's activities against its contract for the second five-year period, and to obtain information on how the contractor had addressed the questions and recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission following the review of its annual reports.

56. The second inspection was carried out for the three contracts of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the main purpose was to assess performance in specific areas, such as annual reporting, responses to the questions and recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, technology development, data management and future exploration strategies.

57. At its meeting in March 2025, the Legal and Technical Commission reviewed responses from the eight contractors identified at its previous session as requiring specific attention. It noted that, while some contractors had provided satisfactory responses, for others, further clarification and review was required. To that end, the relevant contractors will be invited, through the secretariat and following the modalities set out in [ISBA/29/LTC/6](#), to a virtual exchange of views with the Commission in May 2025. The objective is to facilitate a detailed exchange of views on ongoing concerns, in line with the modalities, and enhance mutual understanding and expectations regarding the implementation of contracts. The Commission will report to the Council on the outcome of the exchange of views in July 2025.

58. Since 2017, the Secretary-General has held seven annual consultative meetings with contractors to discuss issues of common interest and share best practices in deep-sea exploration. This also provides an opportunity to discuss the role of the Authority in a global context and engage the support and cooperation of contractors in the programmatic work of the Authority.

59. The seventh annual consultation was held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 30 September to 2 October 2024, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology. It was attended by 48 representatives of contractors. Participants discussed the ongoing work of the Council in advancing the draft regulations for exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, the identification and assessment of contractors at risk of non-compliance, and potential collaboration between the Enterprise and contractors and progress made by the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit on contract management activities. Discussions were also held on the priorities and challenges of several contractors, data management and enhancing collaboration among contractors, training and environmental initiatives, such as the establishment of a deep-sea biobank.

60. The next annual consultation will be held in Goa, India, from 18 to 20 September 2025 and will be jointly hosted by the secretariat and the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India.

61. During the meeting of the Council in March 2025, the Secretary-General held two dialogues, one with contractors, and an inaugural dialogue with sponsoring States. Participants welcomed those initiatives by the Secretary-General. During the

Secretary-General's dialogue with contractors, concerns raised included the slow progress made in the development of the draft regulations, the need to enhance intersessional work in that respect, and the need for legal clarification on contentious issues in the draft regulations. Other topics mentioned included support for contractors to engage with cable owners and contractors involved in the installation of submarine cables in the Area, the visibility of the contribution of contractors to deep-sea exploration, scientific research and technology development, and exploration contracts that were due for extension.

62. In the dialogue with sponsoring States, the highlights of the discussions included the pace of the negotiations of the draft regulations, the establishment of a structured information-sharing process between the secretariat and sponsoring States, the need to strengthen the capacity of sponsoring States to effectively fulfil their obligations and the establishment of a dedicated forum for sponsoring States to facilitate the exchange of ideas and address shared concerns.

## **XII. Collaboration with the United Nations, its specialized agencies, funds and programmes and the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention**

63. During the reporting period, the Authority continued its collaboration with the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, advancing joint efforts to enhance technological capacity in support of activities in the Area. As part of that cooperation, a technology needs assessment was undertaken for the United Republic of Tanzania. In addition, the secretariat hosted national experts and research fellows from Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania at the headquarters of the Authority in Kingston. On 5 February 2025, the Secretary-General held a bilateral meeting with the Managing Director of the Technology Bank to explore opportunities for expanding the partnership to additional countries beyond the current areas of focus.

64. The Secretary-General and the secretariat continued to collaborate with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes on matters of mutual interest. The Secretary-General held bilateral meetings with 19 States Parties and engaged with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. In addition, the secretariat maintained exchanges with the United Nations Environment Programme, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Secretary-General also held briefings and consultations with member States, regional and interest-based groups, including the African Group, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the African Small Island Developing States Group, the Caribbean Community, the Pacific Small Island Developing States Group, and the Chairs of the Least Developed Countries Group and the Landlocked Developing Countries Group. These engagements reinforced the critical role of the Authority within the broader United Nations system and provided a platform to strengthen cooperation in fulfilling the mandate of the Authority, consistent with the Convention and international law.

65. The secretariat also continued to engage actively in the work of UN-Oceans and participated in a series of technical meetings and contributed to the regional workshops organized by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea to promote a better understanding of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the

Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and prepare for its entry into force.

66. The secretariat actively engaged in the preparatory process of the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development by contributing to concept papers for the various ocean action panels. The secretariat will participate in a side event entitled “UN-Oceans as a mechanism to mobilize multilateral ocean action and amplify collective impacts toward the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14”.

67. The Secretary-General will participate in the first session of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement (4–25 April) and the thirty-fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention (23–27 June 2025). The Secretary-General will also contribute to the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which will be focused on the theme “Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology: new developments, approaches and challenges”, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2025.

68. In the light of their areas of common interest, the Authority and the African Union, which is an observer to the Authority, engaged in exchanges on the formalization of their cooperation. On 29 July 2022, the Council approved the memorandum of understanding between the Authority and the African Union, the signature of which is planned during the second half of 2025.

69. On 20 July 2023, the Council approved an agreement of cooperation between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Authority. As global interest in seabed resources grows, the agreement formalizes the collaboration between the two organizations and highlights their shared commitment to promoting decent work by upholding international labour standards and to ensuring that the protection of workers’ occupational safety and health in seabed-related operations remains a priority. It also contributes to the pursuit of a just transition in support of a new social contract for the maritime industry.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly important considering the current development of new technologies that may introduce new workplace hazards and risks that may not yet have been addressed by the existing international rules and standards. On 19 December 2024, during a virtual ceremony, the ILO Director General and the Secretary-General signed the agreement.

70. In the light of their many areas of common interest, the Authority and FAO engaged in exchanges on the possibility of formalizing their cooperation. On 28 March 2024, the Council approved the memorandum of understanding between the two organizations. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to sign it and ensure appropriate coordination with FAO on policy measures under each organization’s respective mandate in areas beyond national jurisdiction, to achieve its objectives. The signature is scheduled to take place at the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

<sup>5</sup> More details can be found in International Seabed Authority, “Competencies of the International Seabed Authority and the International Labour Organization in the context of activities in the Area”, ISA Technical Study No. 26 (Kingston, 2021). Available at [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ISA\\_Technical\\_Study\\_26.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ISA_Technical_Study_26.pdf).

### **XIII. Science and policy interface**

#### **A. Regional environment management plans**

71. During the twenty-ninth session, in July 2024, the Legal and Technical Commission adopted and recommended to the Council for its consideration the draft revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans (ISBA/29/C/10). During the same session, the Commission also adopted its recommendations on technical guidance for the development of regional environmental management plans in support of the standardized procedure and template.<sup>6</sup> In July 2024, the Council considered the draft revised standardized procedure, as recommended by the Commission in ISBA/29/C/10. In its decision ISBA/29/C/24, the Council invited member States and observers of the Authority to provide comments in writing within 90 days of the adoption of the decision for the Commission's consideration, and requested the Commission to submit the revised documents to the Council before the first part of the thirtieth session.

72. During its meeting in March 2025, the Legal and Technical Commission revised the standardized procedure as contained in ISBA/29/C/10, based on the written comments submitted by nine member States and two observers, including one joint submission made by three member States. The Commission recommended to the Council the consideration and adoption of the revised standardized procedure, while flagging that the document would need to be aligned with the draft regulations once adopted.

73. Regarding the development of regional environmental management plans in priority regions identified by the Council, the Authority will convene a scientific workshop in Qingdao, China, from 27 April to 1 May 2025 on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Area of the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the mid-ocean ridges and Central Indian Ocean Basin. The workshop will be held in collaboration with the China Deep Ocean Affairs Administration, the First Institute of Oceanography of the Ministry of Natural Resources of China and the secretariat of the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Financial support was provided to five participants from member States of both the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Authority, under the memorandum of understanding between the Authority and the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

#### **B. Environmental thresholds**

74. During the session in March 2025, the Commission took note of the progress made in the development of environmental threshold values for toxicity, turbidity and settling of resuspended sediments, and underwater noise and light pollution by the subgroups of the intersessional expert group. The finalization of the draft report of that group will continue to be a priority for the Commission, with a view to releasing a draft for stakeholder consultations at the thirtieth session, following which all comments received will be reviewed by the Commission and reported to the Council.

#### **C. DeepData**

75. The DeepData database continues to serve as the main global online platform for sharing data about the Area. In line with the FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable), DeepData offers open access to non-confidential

<sup>6</sup> Available at [www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-29-ltc-8/](http://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-29-ltc-8/).

exploration data. As at 31 March 2025, an average of 8,000 monthly visitors was recorded – an increase of more than 40 per cent compared with the average of the year-earlier period ending 31 March 2024. Improving data quality remains a key priority. During the reporting period, the quality of biological records was enhanced through the addition of taxonomic data for 80 newly described species. Public understanding of DeepData was further supported through the development of an interactive dashboard and tutorial videos. Lastly, efforts to broaden access included the integration of oceanographic data from over 800 sampling stations into the Ocean InfoHub, a global data-sharing network hosted by the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange.

## **XIV. Capacity-building and training**

76. Capacity-building and training have been an integral feature of the Authority's activities since its establishment as they are fundamental to ensure the effective participation of developing States in activities carried out in the Area and in the work of the Authority. In line with its mandate under article 144 of the Convention, the Authority is committed to taking measures to acquire technology and scientific knowledge and to promote and encourage their transfer to developing countries. The Authority places strong emphasis on identifying and promoting opportunities for individuals from developing States to receive training in marine science and technology, with particular attention given to the specific needs of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The secretariat implements many programmes and activities, including national expert deployment initiatives and dedicated partnerships, such as the one established with the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. During the reporting period, 142 experts (35 per cent of whom were women) received training through joint activities.

### **A. Deep Dive**

77. In July 2023, the Authority launched Deep Dive as a flagship initiative under the capacity development strategy, which was adopted by the Assembly during its twenty-seventh session in July 2022.<sup>7</sup> This e-learning platform has been designed to empower member States of the Authority, researchers, academics, policymakers, regulators and the general public with knowledge on the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Since its launch, Deep Dive has achieved significant milestones, including training over 130 participants from 47 countries, achieving an 80 per cent certification rate, encouraging diverse participation and forming strategic partnerships.

78. On 1 October 2024, the secretariat launched the fifth call for applications to the Deep Dive e-learning programme. The fifth cohort of trainees commenced their programme in February 2025.

### **B. Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research**

79. At an informal meeting, on 29 July 2024, the Secretary-General presented the fifth edition of the Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research to Rengaiyan Periasamy, a deep-sea benthic biologist from India, in recognition of his pioneering research, including the discovery and description of 12 new benthic species from the Mid-Indian Ocean Ridge System. In presenting the award, the Secretary-General expressed his gratitude to the Government of Monaco for its contribution in support

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<sup>7</sup> ISBA/27/A/11.

of the Award since its inception and welcomed the contribution from Loke CCZ, which had offered a berth on an exploration cruise in 2026. In addition, Mr. Periasamy will receive training on the tools and methodologies used in the development of regional environmental management plans organized by the International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre from 23 to 26 April 2025 and will participate in the workshop on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Area of the Indian Ocean.

80. The nomination deadline for the sixth edition of the Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research, originally set for 11 April 2025, has been postponed as the Authority undergoes a transition in leadership. This period provides an opportunity to enhance and refine the Award to ensure that it continues to reflect the evolving priorities of deep-sea scientific research and international collaboration. The Authority remains deeply committed to recognizing and supporting outstanding contributions by early-career researchers, in particular those from developing States, in advancing scientific knowledge of the deep-sea environment and promoting sustainable practices.

### **C. PROBLUE Ocean Governance Capacity-Building Programme**

81. The World Bank, with the support of PROBLUE, and in partnership with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations, FAO, the International Seabed Authority, the Melbourne Law School, and the Centre for Maritime and Oceanic Law at the University of Nantes, has developed a set of tools and region-specific training to increase knowledge about ocean governance, treaties and their implementation in national legal frameworks. As a partner of the PROBLUE Ocean Governance Capacity-Building Programme, the secretariat participated in the fifth workshop, focused on the Asian region, which was delivered virtually in February 2025. The workshop was attended by 79 participants from 22 countries.

### **D. Women's empowerment**

82. Since 2017, the Authority has implemented a series of initiatives to support its commitment to advancing the empowerment of women and their leadership in non-traditional and emerging sectors, such as deep-sea-related disciplines, including technology, engineering, taxonomy and the blue economy. This is achieved by developing and furthering strategic partnerships with members, contractors and relevant intergovernmental and regional organizations, including the scientific community and academia. As part of the Women in Deep-Sea Research project, the women scientists in the pilot cohort of the See Her Exceed global mentoring programme are scheduled to deliver two knowledge outputs to conclude their participation in the programme in July 2025.

### **E. International Seabed Authority-Egypt Joint Training and Research Centre**

83. Following the establishment of the International Seabed Authority-Egypt Joint Training and Research Centre, the first training course on environmental impact assessments for activities in the Area was held from 14 to 26 September 2024. The course was implemented by the secretariat with funding from the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund and a grant from the Government of Greece. The training course brought together 18 national experts from 12 member States.

## **F. International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre**

84. The International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre in Qingdao, China, was established by a memorandum of understanding between the Authority and China. From 23 to 27 April 2025, the Centre will host a workshop on advancing marine spatial planning in areas beyond national jurisdiction for sustainable deep-sea stewardship.

## **G. National focal points for capacity development**

85. The Secretary-General convened the fourth annual meeting of the national focal points for capacity development on 16 October 2024. The meeting provided an opportunity to review progress in the implementation of the capacity development strategy adopted in 2022 and to discuss current and planned capacity development activities. In October and November 2024, the secretariat hosted the sixth and seventh virtual certificate award ceremonies for trainees of the contractors' training programmes. A total of 62 beneficiaries from developing States received certificates, of whom 28 were women. The cohort included participants from the landlocked developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States.

## **H. International Seabed Authority Capacity Development Alumni Network**

86. During the reporting period, the secretariat organized the first general meeting of the International Seabed Authority Capacity Development Alumni Network. The event served as a platform for engagement with former beneficiaries and facilitated linkages with International Seabed Authority partners and stakeholders. The secretariat also launched a second call for applications to the Network in November 2024, resulting in additional memberships.

## **I. Expert workshop in Antigua and Barbuda**

87. In November 2024, the secretariat, in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy of the University of the West Indies, hosted an expert workshop in Antigua and Barbuda. The workshop, which brought together representatives of 11 Caribbean Community big ocean States, was aimed at identifying priority capacity development needs to strengthen regional participation in marine scientific research and deep-sea exploration in the Area.

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Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

**Annual report of the Secretary-General under article 166,  
paragraph 4, of the Convention**

## **Implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report provides an annual update on the implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development. Adopted by the Assembly of the Authority in 2020, the action plan serves as the global agenda for deep-sea research.<sup>1</sup>

2. Marine scientific research is one of the core elements upon which the legal regime of the Area lies. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention mandate the Authority to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area, coordinate and disseminate the results when available and carry out marine research concerning the Area.<sup>2</sup> Activities to fulfil the mandate are intertwined with those aimed at delivering the Authority's responsibility under the Convention to take measures to promote and encourage the transfer of scientific knowledge and technology to strengthen the capacity of developing and technologically less developed States, including by setting up appropriate programmes.<sup>3</sup>

3. In 2017, the General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development to advance “the science we need for the ocean

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\* [ISBA/30/A/L.1](#).

<sup>1</sup> For the action plan and previous reports, see [ISBA/29/A/5](#), [ISBA/28/A/8](#), [ISBA/27/A/4](#) and [ISBA/26/A/4](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 143 (2).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., art. 144.



we want” (see resolutions [72/73](#), para. 292, and [75/239](#), para. 306). It designated the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as the coordinating body for its implementation. The General Assembly also invited UN-Oceans and its participating organizations to support the delivery of the Decade in line with their respective mandates (see resolution [75/239](#), para. 307).

4. The Authority participates in UN-Oceans and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in 2020 (see [ISBA/6/A/9](#), para. 13). In the same year, the Assembly of the Authority formalized six strategic research priorities by adopting the action plan. This framework is the global deep-sea research agenda in support of the strategic directions endorsed by the Authority through the strategic plan for the period 2019–2025 (see [ISBA/28/A/18](#), para. 48).

5. The year 2025 marks the midpoint of the Decade. To commemorate this milestone, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission organized the Ocean Decade Conference, held in Barcelona, Spain, from 10 to 12 April 2024, in which the secretariat actively participated.<sup>4</sup>

6. Sections II to IV below outline the progress made in knowledge generation in support of the Decade, highlight engagement with partners and other global processes, describe resource mobilization efforts and present the next steps to support the implementation of the action plan.

## II. Progress in knowledge generation

7. The present section serves to take stock of the contributions to the scientific objectives of the Decade and describe the progress made under the six strategic research priorities of the action plan from June 2024 to June 2025.

### A. Contributions to the scientific objectives of the Decade

8. Substantial progress has been made on global deep-sea science through the Authority and its efforts to catalyse and incentivize global deep-sea research. Through actions implemented directly or with the support of its partners, the Authority has advanced global knowledge of the deep sea. To highlight this, the Authority’s efforts in promoting marine scientific research, including the scientific output generated through exploration activities in the Area, are examined.

9. The secretariat commissioned a stocktaking report on the implementation of the action plan,<sup>5</sup> which highlights how activities undertaken by the Authority contribute to addressing the 10 challenges of the Decade.<sup>6</sup> The report acknowledges progress made in promoting scientific research, establishing strategic partnerships and raising awareness of scientific activities and outputs among States and other stakeholders. It also recognizes the value of collaborative research and investment.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/news/isa-concludes-engagement-at-the-2024-ocean-decade-conference-with-renewed-support-and-commitment-towards-its-msr-action-plan-in-support-of-the-un-decade-of-ocean-science](http://www.isa.org.jm/news/isa-concludes-engagement-at-the-2024-ocean-decade-conference-with-renewed-support-and-commitment-towards-its-msr-action-plan-in-support-of-the-un-decade-of-ocean-science).

<sup>5</sup> Fifteen independent experts participated in the process, which was led by the Secretary-General with support from the National Oceanography Centre of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (see [ISBA/29/A/5](#), para. 42).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Report\\_Contribution-of-ISA-to-the-scientific-objectives-of-the-UN-Decade.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Report_Contribution-of-ISA-to-the-scientific-objectives-of-the-UN-Decade.pdf).

10. Seven recommendations were put forward to further strengthen the impact of the action plan. Each recommendation emphasizes fostering collaboration, raising awareness or encouraging innovative approaches aligned with the expectations of decision makers and the broader scientific community.

11. In terms of investment, the Authority has allocated \$8.4 million of its regular budget over the past 10 years to programmatic expenditure aimed at promoting marine scientific research in the Area. Member States, United Nations entities and research institutes have provided extrabudgetary contributions in support of this, totalling \$1.9 million.<sup>7</sup> In 2022, the Authority established the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund, a multi-donor trust fund to ensure a steady stream of financing for marine scientific research and capacity development (see [ISBA/27/A/10](#)). To date, the Fund has financed 14 projects totalling \$1.26 million, supported by donations from eight member States.<sup>8</sup>

12. Since 2020, the secretariat, in collaboration with various experts, scientific institutions and partner organizations, has published four technical studies on scientific topics, namely a regional environmental assessment of the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge and studies on remote monitoring systems, technological advancements and potential interactions between fishing efforts and activities in the Area.<sup>9</sup>

13. Since 2020, the secretariat has organized 29 events to promote deep-sea research, including online and in-person workshops, webinars, information series and side events, securing the participation of 879 experts, of whom a quarter have been from developing countries. In addition, the secretariat has forged 44 partnerships and obtained financial support from 19 member States and the European Union.

## **B. Recent progress towards the six strategic research priorities of the action plan**

### **Strategic research priority 1: advancing scientific knowledge and understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions, in the Area**

14. Under this strategic research priority, the secretariat facilitates activities to develop a robust scientific knowledge base to support decision-making processes.

15. A regional environmental characterization report was prepared to inform the workshop on the development of the regional environmental management plan for the Area of the Indian Ocean, to be held in Qingdao, China, from 27 April to 1 May 2025. The report contained a synthesis and compilation of the best available scientific data on the marine environment and information on human activities specific to that region.<sup>10</sup>

16. The secretariat contributed to global scientific reports, in particular in relation to activities coordinated by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. First, inputs were provided for the chapter on deep-sea minerals of the *World Ocean Assessment*, with a focus on benefit-sharing and the socioeconomic implications of exploration activities in the Area as part of the third Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including

<sup>7</sup> Contributions have been made by China, France, Ghana, Monaco and the United Kingdom and by the African Development Bank, the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

<sup>8</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/isa-partnership-fund](http://www.isa.org.jm/isa-partnership-fund). Donations have been provided by China, France, Ireland, Mexico, Monaco, the Russian Federation, Spain and Switzerland.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/publications](http://www.isa.org.jm/publications).

<sup>10</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-remp-for-the-area-of-the-indian-ocean](http://www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-remp-for-the-area-of-the-indian-ocean).

Socioeconomic Aspects.<sup>11</sup> Second, the secretariat contributed to the report of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea to the General Assembly, highlighting new developments in technology and capacity development.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, the secretariat co-authored the United Nations report on marine geospatial information management and described the importance of DeepData in supporting evidence-based decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

17. The secretariat launched an open-source bibliographic repository on the Authority's website that brings together the scientific outputs reported by contractors in their annual reports from the past four years. The repository currently contains 431 peer-reviewed scientific publications and will be updated annually.<sup>14</sup>

**Strategic research priority 2: standardizing and innovating methodologies for deep-sea biodiversity assessment, including taxonomic identification and description, in the Area**

18. The reporting period marks the third year of the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative, a flagship initiative aimed at catalysing biodiversity research and capacity to support global policy agendas and ensure effective protection of deep-sea ecosystems in the Area. The Initiative provides the framework to advance strategic research priority 2 by promoting activities to increase biodiversity knowledge, as well as enhancing the exchange of biological data and taxonomic skills. Two new financial partners, the Governments of Ireland and China, joined the Initiative's founding donors – the European Commission and the Governments of the Republic of Korea and France – while other member States have committed funds for the Initiative's 2025–2026 workplan.<sup>15</sup>

19. In March 2025, the second edition of the “One Thousand Reasons” campaign to accelerate species descriptions and enhance consistency in taxonomic practices was launched, with a voluntary contribution by the Government of Ireland to the Partnership Fund.<sup>16</sup> This edition is specifically designed to support scientists in developing member States. The first edition led to the description of 90 new species and resulted in the publication of over 30 scientific papers. The new taxonomic data are uploaded to the Authority's DeepData database and will also be shared with the Ocean Biodiversity Information System, with which the secretariat partners to promote broader data accessibility.<sup>17</sup> As of April 2025, the System contains 133 data sets covering the period from 2004 to 2023, with data for 863 species.

20. The secretariat continued its collaboration with the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer to enhance scientific capacity in biodiversity assessment and increase deep-sea biodiversity knowledge, undertaking two initiatives. In January 2025, the fellowship of a taxonomist from India was extended so that she could continue her work on describing species and studying ecological adaptation to abyssal plain habitats. A new edition of the MeioScool workshop and fellowship will bring together experts in meiofauna to raise awareness of the role of meiofauna in marine ecosystems, and train students and young researchers from developing countries in

<sup>11</sup> See [www.un.org/regularprocess/woa3](http://www.un.org/regularprocess/woa3).

<sup>12</sup> See [www.un.org/depts/los/consultative\\_process/consultative\\_process.htm](http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm).

<sup>13</sup> The report was prepared at the invitation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in reference to paragraph 388 of General Assembly resolution 77/248 and is available at [www.un.org/Depts/los/doalos\\_publications/publicationtexts/MarineGeospatialInfoMgmt.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/doalos_publications/publicationtexts/MarineGeospatialInfoMgmt.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/marine-scientific-research](http://www.isa.org.jm/marine-scientific-research).

<sup>15</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/sski](http://www.isa.org.jm/sski).

<sup>16</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/news/call-for-taxonomy-projects-to-describe-deep-sea-species](http://www.isa.org.jm/news/call-for-taxonomy-projects-to-describe-deep-sea-species).

<sup>17</sup> See <https://obis.org>.

the latest methodologies. Both initiatives are funded by voluntary contributions from France to the Partnership Fund.

21. To support global decision-making processes, the secretariat attended the twenty-sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nairobi from 13 to 18 May 2024. The work of the Authority relevant to the objectives of that Convention was presented and the secretariat engaged in discussions with other competent organizations, in particular on issues related to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and linkages with future implementation of the 2023 Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. Similarly, the secretariat participated in the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November 2024. Meetings with the Executive Secretary of the Convention and representatives of other relevant international organizations and stakeholders provided opportunities to promote the Authority's work on increasing deep-sea knowledge and protecting deep-sea biodiversity. The secretariat also co-organized a side-event with Argentina, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Convention secretariat and the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea to engage other stakeholders and mobilize partners for efforts to advance deep-sea biodiversity knowledge.

22. Considering the scientific advances towards using environmental DNA (eDNA) for deep-sea biodiversity assessments, the secretariat published a policy brief highlighting the role of the Authority in addressing the challenges and opportunities of using eDNA approaches.<sup>18</sup> The publication reinforces the importance of advancing identification, including the sequencing of deep-sea species, and collaboration between scientists and the private sector to ensure that eDNA tools are used effectively for the sustainable development of resources in the Area.

### **Strategic research priority 3: facilitating technology development for activities in the Area, including ocean observation and monitoring**

23. Developments in technology are a fundamental enabler of activities in the Area. The Authority is mandated to acquire technology and scientific knowledge relating to activities in the Area and take measures to promote and encourage the transfer of technology to developing States of such technology and scientific knowledge so that all States Parties benefit.<sup>19</sup> With this mandate, the secretariat aims to serve as a focal point for acquiring, evaluating and disseminating relevant technological knowledge and to facilitate the use of such knowledge, including by developing appropriate tools and platforms.

24. Under this strategic research priority, initiatives are being implemented across five priority domains: ocean observation and communication; monitoring; autonomy, automation and robotics; machine learning and artificial intelligence; and mining, energy and metal processing. The secretariat monitors technology development in these areas, including when led by contractors, through participation in international conferences. For example, it participated in the Underwater Mining Conference organized by the International Marine Minerals Society, in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, from 15 to 21 September 2024.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ISA\\_Policy\\_brief\\_Environmental\\_DNA\\_studies\\_have\\_the\\_potential\\_to\\_advance\\_deep-sea\\_biodiversity\\_knowledge.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ISA_Policy_brief_Environmental_DNA_studies_have_the_potential_to_advance_deep-sea_biodiversity_knowledge.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 144.

<sup>20</sup> See [www.sbma.gov.ck/news-3/article-166](http://www.sbma.gov.ck/news-3/article-166).

25. Building on the success of the workshop on advanced technologies for the priority domains, held in Portugal in April 2024, the secretariat has been invited by Kobe University and its Kobe Ocean-Bottom Exploration Centre to organize a second workshop in Kobe, Japan, in June 2025. The workshop will focus on emerging technologies for designing monitoring schemes in the context of potential future activities. Participants will also examine the implications of technological innovations for regional monitoring and thresholds and identify capacity development needs to ensure that all countries can benefit from technological advancement.

**Strategic research priority 4: enhancing scientific knowledge and understanding of potential impacts of activities in the Area**

26. Increasing scientific knowledge of the potential impacts of activities in the Area is crucial to discharging the Authority's mandate to take necessary measures with respect to activities in the Area to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from such activities.<sup>21</sup>

27. To this end, the secretariat delivered a policy brief on plastic in the deep sea, highlighting the growing body of scientific studies on this topic over time.<sup>22</sup> The brief also underscores the need to establish a baseline, in particular in the light of ongoing negotiations on the international legally binding instrument on plastics pollution (see [UNEP/PP/INC.5/4](#)).

28. The secretariat also published two fact-checks. The first summarizes the results of the Authority's technical study on the potential interactions between fishing and mineral resource-related activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It highlighted limited overlap between fishing and potential deep-sea mining areas, though further study is needed on indirect impacts.<sup>23</sup> The second fact-check presents factors involved in the complex interplay of potential deep-sea mining with global carbon cycle processes. It indicates that while global impacts on the carbon cycle are unlikely due to the small footprint of potential exploitation compared with the vastness of the ocean, local effects may occur, underscoring the need for a strong environmental baseline and monitoring.<sup>24</sup>

29. Scientific understanding of sediment plumes has made substantial progress. Scientific cruises – conducted through a joint effort between two contractors, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany and Global Sea Mineral Resources, and scientists from the MiningImpact consortium – funded by the Joint Programming Initiative for Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans obtained quantitative data for the modelling of mining-related impacts.<sup>25</sup> For example, it was demonstrated that the height of the plume did not rise above the collector vehicle.<sup>26</sup> Recognizing the importance of these and related findings, the Partnership Fund Board approved a project valued at \$100,000 to develop a methodology for the adaptive management of sediment plumes from deep-sea mining activities.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 145.

<sup>22</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/publications](http://www.isa.org.jm/publications).

<sup>23</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/publications/technical-study-33-potential-interactions-between-fishing-and-mineral-resource-related-activities-in-areas-beyond-national-jurisdiction-a-spatial-analysis](http://www.isa.org.jm/publications/technical-study-33-potential-interactions-between-fishing-and-mineral-resource-related-activities-in-areas-beyond-national-jurisdiction-a-spatial-analysis) and [www.isa.org.jm/isa-fact-check-2024-2](http://www.isa.org.jm/isa-fact-check-2024-2).

<sup>24</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/isa-fact-check-2024-1](http://www.isa.org.jm/isa-fact-check-2024-1).

<sup>25</sup> See [www.jpi-oceans.eu/en/miningimpact](http://www.jpi-oceans.eu/en/miningimpact).

<sup>26</sup> Carlos Muñoz-Royo and others, "An in situ study of abyssal turbidity-current sediment plumes generated by a deep seabed polymetallic nodule mining preprototype collector vehicle", *Science Advances*, vol. 8, No. 38 (2002).



**Strategic research priority 5: promoting dissemination, exchange and sharing of scientific data and deep-sea research outputs and increasing deep-sea literacy**

30. Scientific data form the cornerstone of research, serving as the foundation for environmental baseline studies and enabling informed decision-making. The Authority's global online repository, the DeepData database, is instrumental in fulfilling its mandate of sharing scientific data. All non-confidential data from exploration activities in the Area are made publicly available, following findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable principles.<sup>27</sup> Since its launch in 2019, DeepData has amassed over 14 terabytes of structured and unstructured data collected in the Area. The DeepData website has had approximately 19 million hits from over 321,000 visitors, who downloaded approximately 600 gigabytes of data from the database.

31. To support public understanding of the repository, a data visualization tool and communication products have been developed.<sup>28</sup> The DeepData dashboard interface enables users to answer queries in the database. A video series entitled "DeepData for Dummies" was premiered during the twenty-ninth session of the Council in July 2024. The secretariat also contributed a chapter on the Authority's progress on data management under a series on deep-sea mining, which is currently under review with the publisher.

32. To enhance the accessibility and discoverability of information, oceanographic data from 800 DeepData sampling stations were integrated into the Ocean Data and Information System.<sup>29</sup> Coordinated by the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the System is a global network of interconnected platforms designed to support interoperable data-sharing.

33. To advance deep-sea literacy, two initiatives supported by the Partnership Fund are under way: a pilot project (\$20,000) was launched in Mozambique, targeting early-career ocean professionals; and funding was allocated for the development of a data visualization platform for activities in the Area (\$125,000).

**Strategic research priority 6: strengthening deep-sea scientific capacity of Authority members, in particular developing States**

34. Capacity-development efforts have been integral to the Authority's activities since its establishment in 1994. In line with its mandate to foster international cooperation on marine scientific research for the benefit of developing member States, the secretariat facilitates a range of training programmes guided by the Authority's capacity development strategy (ISBA/27/A/5).

35. As part of the contractors' training programme, in line with their legal obligations, the Authority's exploration contractors provided 83 new training opportunities during the reporting period, offered by 12 contractors under 19 contracts for exploration.<sup>30</sup> One third involved at-sea on-board training, while others included fellowships (including Master's programmes), internships, seminars, autonomous underwater vehicle training, expert deployments and practical courses. Of the placements, 41 per cent were awarded to women and 23 per cent to candidates from the least developed countries and small island developing States. With this latest round, the total number of training opportunities offered since 1994 has surpassed 500.

<sup>27</sup> See <https://data.isa.org.jm/isa/map>.

<sup>28</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/deepdata-database/deepdata-dashboard](http://www.isa.org.jm/deepdata-database/deepdata-dashboard).

<sup>29</sup> See <https://odis.org>.

<sup>30</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/contractor-training-programme](http://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/contractor-training-programme).

36. Two deployments of national experts to the secretariat were supported by the Authority's joint project framework with the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries, established in 2022 to strengthen the capacities of the least developed countries in emerging blue economic sectors.<sup>31</sup> A geologist from Nepal assessed sediment characteristics within the Clarion–Clipperton Zone, while a marine scientist from the United Republic of Tanzania advanced sediment plume modelling.<sup>32</sup>

37. Joint Training and Research Centres support the Authority in fulfilling its mandate to build capacity.<sup>33</sup> The first national Centre was launched in 2020 in collaboration with China and has trained 80 experts in two training workshops. It will organize a third training workshop from 23 to 27 April 2025 in Qingdao, China, on tools and methodologies for the development of regional environmental management plans. In April 2025, the Centre launched its first call for joint research projects with a focus on data and biodiversity.<sup>34</sup> In 2024, the Authority established its first regional Joint Training and Research Centre in collaboration with Egypt. With financial support from the Partnership Fund and Greece, the Centre held the first-ever training course on environmental impact assessments for exploration activities in the Area, in Alexandria, Egypt, from 14 to 26 September 2024.<sup>35</sup> During the reporting period, the two Centres have strengthened the capacity of 41 experts from 29 countries – including 8 small island developing States and 5 least developed countries – with 40 per cent of participants being women.

38. To advance women's empowerment, the Authority advanced three initiatives under its Women in Deep-Sea Research project. First, the pilot of the global mentoring programme See Her Exceed, consisting of 16 mentors and mentees, will be completed in July 2025.<sup>36</sup> The programme will deliver guidelines aimed at encouraging the greater participation of women in offshore deep-sea research cruises. It will also deliver an analysis of the scientific output reported in exploration activities. To further mobilize resources and partners, the secretariat promoted the programme through a dedicated communication booth during the twenty-ninth session of the Authority. In addition, the Secretary-General, together with France, organized a side event during the thirtieth session of the Council in March 2025 to call upon member States to support the initiative and ensure its long-term outcomes. Second, the Women in Blue initiative was organized by the National Research Council of Italy. A winter school on marine geology and deep sea frontiers was organized from 27 to 31 January 2025, co-funded through the Partnership Fund (\$98,000). It provided training in marine geology, including at-sea experience, for 10 women from 10 countries.<sup>37</sup> Third, nearly all contractors pledged to allocate half of their training opportunities to qualified women, where appropriate.

<sup>31</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/untblde](http://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/untblde).

<sup>32</sup> Kabita Karki, geologist at the Department of Mines and Geology, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Nepal; and Fadhili Malesa, marine scientist at the School of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology, Dar es Salaam University, United Republic of Tanzania.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, arts. 276 and 277.

<sup>34</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/isa-china-joint-training-and-research-centre-2](http://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/isa-china-joint-training-and-research-centre-2).

<sup>35</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/news/first-ever-worldwide-environmental-impact-assessment-training-course-for-activities-conducted-in-the-area-completed-at-the-isa-egypt-joint-training-and-research-centre](http://www.isa.org.jm/news/first-ever-worldwide-environmental-impact-assessment-training-course-for-activities-conducted-in-the-area-completed-at-the-isa-egypt-joint-training-and-research-centre).

<sup>36</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/widsr-project/see-her-exceed](http://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/widsr-project/see-her-exceed).

<sup>37</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/women-in-blue-initiative](http://www.isa.org.jm/women-in-blue-initiative). Participants were from Argentina, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kiribati, Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria and Tonga.



39. Finally, under the DeepDive virtual e-learning platform, two cohorts comprising 57 experts were trained, including on topics related to marine scientific research in the deep sea.<sup>38</sup>

### **III. Stakeholder engagement and mobilization of partners for the implementation of the action plan**

40. Increasing visibility, reinforcing political support and ensuring alignment with global priorities are essential to expand partnerships and mobilize more resources to accelerate the implementation of the action plan. To this end, the secretariat engages in global forums, including two key examples described below.

41. First, the Secretary-General will participate in the third United Nations Ocean Conference, in Nice, France, from 9 to 13 June 2025. In preparation for the conference, the secretariat contributed to background papers on topics relevant to the Authority's work. In collaboration with eight partners, an application for a side event has been submitted to showcase progress achieved and highlight upcoming opportunities to accelerate global actions for enhanced deep-sea research and capacity development in support of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

42. On the margins of the Ocean Conference, a letter of cooperation will be signed with the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to strengthen collaboration, focusing on cumulative impact assessments. In addition, a memorandum of understanding will be signed with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to facilitate data-sharing and strengthen scientific collaboration between the two organizations.

43. During the Ocean Conference, the secretariat, together with the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, will launch the Authority's Deep-sea Biobank Initiative, aimed at facilitating global access to deep-sea biological samples and genetic data from the Area for the benefit of all humankind.

44. Second, the secretariat will participate in the tenth Our Ocean Conference in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 28 to 30 April 2025 to engage with representatives of member States, scientific institutions and other stakeholders, foster new partnerships and promote the Authority's efforts to advance global deep-sea science and research capacity.<sup>39</sup> On the margins of the Conference, a letter of cooperation with the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea will be signed, formalizing the partnership for the implementation of the Deep-sea Biobank.

45. To raise awareness of the added value of the Authority's work through the collective implementation of the action plan, the Secretary-General engaged in 44 meetings and discussions from 5 to 15 February 2025, including 30 high-level engagements with key stakeholders from the United Nations and member States of the Authority. These meetings fostered dialogues on the importance of science in deep-sea governance. In addition, support for the call for action on deep-sea science, technology and innovation, launched on the margins of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, held in New York in 2023, has grown.<sup>40</sup> This support creates political momentum to invest more in deep-sea science and technology development and align

<sup>38</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/deep-dive](http://www.isa.org.jm/deep-dive).

<sup>39</sup> See <https://ourocean2025.kr>.

<sup>40</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/call-for-action](http://www.isa.org.jm/call-for-action).

research agendas with the global deep-sea agenda. The call has now been endorsed by 16 member States, three scientific institutions and seven contractors.<sup>41</sup>

46. The secretariat also participates in the advisory committees of five research and technology projects or initiatives. The common objective is to support the Authority's role in promoting science and identify synergies with existing initiatives to avoid overlap. Two of the projects are funded by the European Union: TRIDENT, which focuses on impact assessment tools for sustainable exploration and exploitation; and DeepRest, which addresses the restoration of ecosystems affected by deep-sea mining.<sup>42</sup> The other initiatives in which the secretariat is engaged are: the Decade action entitled "Digital deep-sea typical habitats", aimed at enhancing understanding of deep-sea habitats; the SMARTEX project on deep-sea ecosystem resilience to experimental impacts, funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and the Deep Ocean Observing Strategy, which supports ocean monitoring efforts.<sup>43</sup> Lastly, starting in June 2025, the secretariat will join the board of a project on the ecological aspects of deep-sea mining under the Joint Programming Initiative for Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans.<sup>44</sup>

## IV. Next steps

47. Forthcoming actions will build on the success of existing programmes and the recommendations of the stocktaking report, with particular emphasis on developing flagship initiatives that provide a comprehensive framework for implementing specific strategic research priorities. The secretariat will also continue to explore the broader marine science landscape to identify emerging topics of relevance, with the aim of advancing scientific knowledge in support of regulatory development under the Authority. Lastly, emphasis will be placed on expanding and diversifying content and partnerships, as well as capacity development activities under the action plan.

## V. Recommendations

48. **The Assembly is invited to:**

- (a) **Take note of the information provided in the present report;**
- (b) **Request the Secretary-General to continue her efforts to mobilize the resources and partnerships necessary for advancing the implementation of the strategic research priorities under the action plan;**
- (c) **Encourage all members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and individuals to contribute to the implementation of the action plan.**

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<sup>41</sup> The member States are: Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Malta, Mauritius, Nauru, Norway, Singapore, Togo, Tonga and United Kingdom. A list of scientific institutions and contractors is available at [www.isa.org.jm/call-for-action](http://www.isa.org.jm/call-for-action).

<sup>42</sup> See <https://deepseatrident.eu> and <https://deep-rest.ifremer.fr>.

<sup>43</sup> See <https://smartexccz.org> and [www.deepoceanobserving.org/pages/about-dooos](http://www.deepoceanobserving.org/pages/about-dooos).

<sup>44</sup> See [www.jpi-oceans.eu/en/ecological-aspects-deep-sea-mining](http://www.jpi-oceans.eu/en/ecological-aspects-deep-sea-mining).



## Assembly Council

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Item 10 of the provisional agenda of the Assembly\*

#### **Report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise**

Agenda item 15 of the Council

#### **Report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise**

### **Report on activities related to the Enterprise**

#### **Submitted by the interim Director General of the Enterprise**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The purpose of the present report is to inform the Council and the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority of the activities undertaken and progress made by the interim Director General of the Enterprise during the period July 2024 to May 2025. It follows the first report of the interim Director General, presented during the twenty-ninth session of the Authority in July 2024 ([ISBA/29/A/6-ISBA/29/C/12](#)).

2. In accordance with article 170 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and section 2 of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (1994 Agreement), the Enterprise shall be the organ of the Authority that shall carry out activities in the Area directly, as well as the transporting, processing and marketing of minerals recovered from the Area. The Enterprise shall act in accordance with the general policies of the Assembly and shall be subject to the directives and control the Council. It also has the crucial role of facilitating the participation of developing States in activities in the Area. It is to enjoy autonomy in the conduct of its operations when it becomes independent of the secretariat.

3. The Council is reminded that, by virtue of section 2 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, the secretariat of the Authority shall perform the functions of the Enterprise until it begins to operate independently of the secretariat. The independent functioning of the Enterprise may be triggered by either of two events, namely, receipt by the Council of an application for a joint venture operation with the Enterprise or approval of a plan of work for exploitation for an entity other than the Enterprise. If the trigger event is an application for a joint venture operation with the Enterprise, the Council must consider whether such an operation with the Enterprise accords with “sound commercial principles”. As already underscored in the previous report, neither

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\* [ISBA/30/A/L.1](#).



the Convention nor the Agreement define what is meant by the phrase “sound commercial principles”. If the Council is satisfied that joint-venture operations with the Enterprise accord with sound commercial principles, it has the obligation to issue a directive for such independent functioning.

## **II. Functions of the interim Director General**

4. It is recalled that the interim Director General assumed his position on 20 January 2024.

5. It is recalled that the functions of the interim Director General are outlined in section 2 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, namely:

(a) Monitoring and review of trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities, including regular analysis of world metal market conditions and metal prices, trends and prospects;

(b) Assessment of the results of the conduct of marine scientific research with respect to activities in the Area, with particular emphasis on research related to the environmental impact of activities in the Area;

(c) Assessment of available data relating to prospecting and exploration, including the criteria for such activities;

(d) Assessment of technological developments relevant to activities in the Area, in particular technology relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment;

(e) Evaluation of information and data relating to areas reserved for the Authority;

(f) Assessment of approaches to joint venture operations;

(g) Collection of information on the availability of trained manpower;

(h) Study of managerial policy options for the administration of the Enterprise at different stages of its operations.

6. In addition, the interim Director General was mandated, by the Council, the following functions:

(a) To represent the interests of the Enterprise with regard to the development of the regulatory regime for activities in the Area;

(b) To ensure coherence and synergies between the work of the Enterprise and the decisions and regulations agreed upon by the governing bodies of the Authority;

(c) To support the development of projects in cooperation with developing States for improving scientific understanding of the Area;

(d) To prepare draft rules, regulations and procedures for the administration and management of the Enterprise once it begins to function independently of the secretariat of the Authority;

(e) To represent the Enterprise in international meetings, conferences and proceedings, as may be required;

(f) To manage the office of the interim Director General of the Enterprise;

(g) To perform other duties as required.

### **III. Activities of the interim Director General**

#### **A. Participation in discussions on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area**

7. The interim Director General attended the second part of the twenty-ninth session and the first part of the thirtieth session of the Council and participated in negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, in order to provide the Council with the views of the Enterprise on issues relevant to its interests, as well as to make comments and offer textual suggestions in relation to the draft regulations as a whole.

8. Interventions delivered during the two sessions were focused on, among other things, the need to ensure that the draft regulations are consistent with the legal framework governing the Enterprise under Part XI of the Convention and under the 1994 Agreement. It was also emphasized that, although the Enterprise will be subject to the same obligations as private contractors,<sup>1</sup> there are instances where this will not be the case, for example with regard to the equalization measure of the draft regulations, in the light of the provisions of article 10 (2) and (3) of annex IV to the Convention. The interim Director General suggested in that context that the definition of “contractor” for the purpose of the draft regulations needed to reflect the similarities and differences between private contractors and the Enterprise as provided for in the Convention and the Agreement.

9. The interim Director General commented on and further took note of the importance – underscored by several delegations – of properly reflecting the mechanism of “reserved areas” within the draft regulations.

10. Alongside interventions in the plenary of the Council and the negotiations of the draft regulations, the interim Director General also participated, on 16 October 2024, in the intersessional working group on underwater cultural heritage. In addition, and consistent with comments made during the deliberations on the draft regulations on exploitation, the interim Director General also participated in the intersessional working group on an equalization measure on 25 March 2025.

11. In the context of his participation in the plenary of the Council during the first part of the thirtieth session, in March 2025, the interim Director General delivered a statement on the announcement made by The Metals Company, in which it expressed the intention to carry out activities in the Area through an application for a plan of work submitted to a State not party to the Convention. In his interventions, the interim Director General recalled the customary nature of the principle of the common heritage of humankind and the importance of the Enterprise for the full implementation of that principle. He emphasized further that acting outside the exclusive mandate of the Authority would impair the ability of the Enterprise to carry out its mandate.

#### **B. Study of managerial and administrative policy options for the Enterprise**

12. It is recalled that, on the basis of the evolutionary approach to the operationalization of the Enterprise, an important part of the functions of the interim Director General is to take the steps necessary to prepare for the independent operation of the Enterprise. A proper managerial structure, in particular a framework

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<sup>1</sup> See in particular section 2, para. 4, of the annex to the 1994 Agreement.

of managerial rules, should be in place by the time Enterprise becomes fully independent of the secretariat.

13. On the basis of preliminary research carried out since July 2024, it is the view of the interim Director General that the Enterprise should adopt a structured and policy-driven organizational model aligned with the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority, consisting of core departments, such as Legal and Security, Economics, Marketing and Research, Operations and Mining, and Environment, Safety, Health and Technology. The structure would be supported by the following five key management functions: planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling.

14. The initial documents necessary for the internal administration of the Enterprise, which must adhere to the relevant provisions of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, must include a guiding policy statement, which should emphasize sustainability, regulatory compliance, innovation and environmental stewardship. Furthermore, a comprehensive set of management policies must be implemented, covering areas such as workplace safety, equal opportunity, conduct, data protection, remote work and conflicts of interest. These policies, which should be detailed in an employee handbook, will serve as the foundation for a transparent, ethical and efficient organizational culture.

### **C. Monitoring and review of trends in the mining industry**

15. During the reporting period, and consistent with its mandate, the interim Director General continued to monitor and review trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities and conducted analysis of world metal market conditions and metal prices, trends and prospects. In addition to conducting desktop research on the subject, he accepted the invitation of the Secretary-General of the International Nickel Study Group, the International Copper Study Group and the International Lead and Zinc Study Group to attend the meetings of those intergovernmental organizations, held in Lisbon from 22 to 24 April 2025. The meetings brought together representatives of States, observer organizations and industry and was geared towards promoting increased transparency and international cooperation in a forum where industry, Governments and other entities discuss common problems and objectives in the world metal markets.

16. Participation in the meetings was useful to obtain accurate and timely information on capacities, production, usage, trade, stocks, prices, technologies, research and development and other factors that may influence the supply and demand of metals.

### **D. Assessment of available data relating to reserved areas**

17. The Council should note that, on the basis of the information received from the secretariat, the assessment of available data relating to reserved areas remains the same as that reflected in the previous report. It is noted that no application for exploration in reserved areas was submitted during the reporting period.

### **E. Funding of the Enterprise and joint venture operations**

18. The Council is reminded that, further to the adoption of the 1994 Agreement, States are no longer under the legal obligation to fund one mine site of the Enterprise, which can finance itself only through the other means envisaged in article 11 (1), in particular in subparagraphs (b), (d) and (e) thereof, of annex IV to the Convention.

19. At the present stage, it is emphasized that, in accordance with the above-mentioned article 11 (1) (b), the Enterprise can access voluntary contributions made by States Parties for the purpose of financing activities of the Enterprise. Initial discussions were held with a few members of the Authority on this matter on the margins of the first part of the thirtieth session.

20. Among the above-mentioned sources of funding, the most relevant and the most capable of providing the Enterprise with a stable source of income is, in theory, the option under the above-mentioned article 11 (1) (d), namely, income of the Enterprise from its operations. Nevertheless, this source of funding would be available only when the Enterprise becomes independent of the secretariat as, pursuant to section 2, paragraph 2 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, the Enterprise is required to conduct its initial deep seabed mining operations through joint ventures.

21. The interim Director General continues to assess potential approaches to joint venture arrangements, in keeping with section 2, paragraph 1 (f), of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. In this regard, it is recalled that a total of 11 contractors, upon submission of a plan of work for exploration, selected the option to offer the Enterprise an interest in a future joint venture in lieu of contributing a reserved area to the Authority.

22. To that end, from 19 to 31 July 2024, the interim Director General met with eight sponsoring States and a number of contractors during the second part of the twenty-ninth session, to discuss the prospects of entering a joint venture. In January 2025, letters were sent to contractors and sponsoring States on the subject. A significant number of them responded, indicating in their replies that they saw possibilities of such an arrangement in the future. However, some of them highlighted uncertainty in the adoption of the regulations on exploitation as a concern moving forward. During the first part of the thirtieth session, the interim Director General met with additional sponsoring States and contractors to engage in further dialogue on establishing a joint venture. In some cases, those meetings were followed up with virtual meetings.

23. The Council should note further that, following virtual meetings, by a letter dated 28 January 2025, Impossible Metals, Inc., conveyed a statement of interest for a joint venture with the Enterprise. Additional information of a concrete nature on this matter will be forthcoming, and the Council will be informed and its guidance sought on the way forward.

## **F. Transfer of technology**

24. It is recalled that, further to the adoption of the 1994 Agreement, there is no longer any obligation to transfer technology to the Enterprise. Under section 5, paragraph 1 (a), of the annex to the Agreement, the Enterprise and developing States seeking deep seabed mining technology must “obtain such technology on fair and reasonable commercial terms and conditions on the open market, or through joint-venture arrangements.” The Council was reminded of this issue, and language was proposed to ensure that it is adequately reflected in the draft regulations on exploitation.

25. With regard to technology, work to assess and obtain information continues, including through desktop studies. On 16 July 2024, together with the Office of Environmental Monitoring and Mineral Resources of the secretariat, the Enterprise co-hosted its first side event, on the margins of the second part of the twenty-ninth session, dedicated to the importance of technology to ensuring the sustainable use of resources in the Area. A second side event was held on 18 March 2025, on the margins of the first part of the thirtieth session. The event, co-organized with Impossible

Metals, was focused on artificial intelligence-driven robotics technology for the environmentally sustainable collection of nodules.

## **G. Participation in annual contractors meeting**

26. The interim Director General participated in the seventh annual contractors meeting, held from 30 September to 2 October 2024 in Busan, Republic of Korea, and hosted by the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology. The meeting brought together contractors and officials of the secretariat of the Authority, as well as representatives of the Institute.

27. The interim Director General presented information on the mandate of the Enterprise and on the opportunities available to contractors for collaboration and cooperation with it, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. The presentation included references to access to reserved areas, to the financial provisions governing the Enterprise and to the measures concerning the independent operation of the Enterprise.

28. The agenda of the meeting also included a field trip showcasing deep sea science and technology, organized by the South Sea Research Institute.

## **H. Cooperation and capacity-building**

29. One of the priorities of the interim Director General is to foster further cooperation with interested stakeholder. Such cooperation is essential for the purpose of enhancing the capacity of the Enterprise, for example, in terms of personnel training. In line with this approach, on 11 December 2024, a letter of cooperation was concluded with the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, an institution that was granted observer status by the Assembly in July 2024 (see [ISBA/29/A/15](#)). The letter of cooperation is focused on areas of cooperation, including capacity-building programmes and tailored training programmes to enhance understanding of processes, on policy development and environmental practices relating to deep seabed mining and marine conservation, among other shared priorities, as well as on research on environmental liability mechanisms.

30. A further meeting with the Institute was held on 29 January 2025, to discuss the way forward for implementing the provisions of the letter of cooperation. The Council is informed that, to date, cooperation between the Institute and the Enterprise has resulted in, inter alia, the awarding of a scholarship to a research assistant, Ciaron Walker, to pursue an online course on foundations of public international law.

## **I. Other activities**

31. On 30 January 2025, the interim Director General of the Enterprise wrote to SubCom, LLC, on a matter related to the laying of submarine cables in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. This was done on the basis of the rights of the Enterprise to conduct activities in the Area under article 170 of the Convention, article 3 of annex III to the Convention and section 2 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. Accordingly, the interim Director General of the Enterprise should also be notified when activities of this nature are being planned.

32. On the margins of the first part of the thirtieth session, the interim Director General of the Enterprise accepted invitations to participate in the first meeting of sponsoring States, which was organized by the Secretary-General of the Authority, as well as a briefing for contractors.



#### **IV. Final remarks and recommendation**

33. The Council and the Assembly are invited to take note of the present report.
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### Thirtieth session

Kingston, 21–25 July 2025

Agenda item 8

**Annual report of the Secretary-General under article 166,  
paragraph 4, of the Convention**

## **Restructuring of the secretariat of the International Seabed Authority**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

1. The secretariat is one of the principal organs of the Authority. In accordance with article 166 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Authority may require. In accordance with article 167 of the Convention, the staff of the secretariat shall consist of such qualified scientific and technical and other personnel as may be required to fulfil the administrative functions of the Authority. In this regard, the principle of cost-effective and evolutionary approach shall apply to the functioning of the secretariat.

2. It is recalled that a restructuring of the secretariat was conducted by the former Secretary-General, within the approved budget, after he assumed the role of the Secretary-General in 2017.<sup>1</sup> To ensure optimal service from the secretariat to the Council and the Assembly and their subsidiary organs in alignment with the evolving priorities in implementing the mandate of the Authority and the visions of the new Secretary-General, in particular to enhance the efficiency, transparency, accountability and cost-effectiveness of the work of the secretariat, it is necessary to restructure the secretariat, as done previously, within the approved budget.

3. It is also recalled that the Assembly, at its twenty-ninth session, approved the budget of the Authority for the years 2025 and 2026, with an attached staffing table containing 33 staff in the Professional and higher categories (including the Secretary-General), 2 National Professional Officers and 21 General Service staff, with 1 additional Professional post from 2026.<sup>2</sup> The current changes to the organization of the secretariat as reflected in Secretary-General's bulletin [ISBA/ST/SGB/2025/1](#) were made without any change to the approved number of posts and their levels, and, therefore, without any financial or budgetary implications. The main aspects of the restructuring are described below.

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<sup>1</sup> See [ISBA/23/A/4](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [ISBA/29/A/3/Add.1-ISBA/29/C/11/Add.1](#).



**Executive Office of the Secretary-General**

4. The Deputy to the Secretary-General, at the D-2 level, also acts as the Chef de Cabinet to support the Secretary-General in all aspects of the secretariat mandate and represent the Secretary-General when requested. The functions of the Chef de Cabinet have also been classified at the D-2 level and will be performed by the Deputy to the Secretary-General, who coordinates the work of the secretariat and supervises the daily operation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and of the Office of Administrative Services, with a view to further strengthening the coordination and collaboration among the substantive offices and the administrative office, mobilizing and making optimal use of the financial, human and other resources of the secretariat.

**Office of Legal Affairs**

5. The post of Deputy to the Secretary-General, at the D-2 level, has been transferred from the Office of Legal Affairs to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The position of Legal Counsel will remain as Head of the Office of Legal Affairs with functions classified at the D-1 level. The post of Knowledge Management Officer, at the P-3 level, vacant since November 2024, is under review for possible reclassification as a Legal Officer at the same level. Resources are mobilized and prioritized to support the ongoing negotiation of the draft regulations on exploitation and associated standards and guidelines, including the engagement of a legal officer under the Junior Professional Officers programme.

**Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources**

6. The Office of Environmental Management and Mineral Resources has been renamed the Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources in order to better reflect its evolving functions and priorities, in particular the stewardship of the database as the knowledge bank on deep seabed science. The Office will be further strengthened with additional support from a Senior Policy Officer (Mineral Resources and Economic Development) at the P-5 level under the Senior Professional Officers programme. It is noted that the post of Senior Scientific Affairs Officer (Marine Geologist) at the P-5 level has been advertised and encumbered since 2020 at the P-4 level as a Scientific Affairs Officer (Marine Geologist). This post is retained at the P-4 level, and the P-5 post is transferred to that of Head of the Office of Administrative Services.

**Office of Administrative Services**

7. The post of Director, at the D-1 level, has been transferred from the Office of Administrative Services to the newly established Office of Contract Management and Capacity-building. With a view to the optimal use of the limited resources to support the substantive work of the Authority, the functions of the Head of the Office of Administrative Services are performed at the P-5 level, reporting to the Deputy to the Secretary-General/Chef de Cabinet.

8. It was noted that the secretariat had maintained one information and communications technology team under the Office of Administrative Services and one data management team under the Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources. With increased efficiency and collaboration, the post of Information and Communications Technology Manager (P-4), vacant since May 2024, was reclassified at the P-3 level, and the P-4 post was reassigned as a Scientific Affairs Officer (Marine Geologist). The post of Associate Information and Communications Technology Officer, at the P-2 level, vacant since January 2025, was reassigned as a Training Coordinator.

### **Office of Contract Management and Capacity-building**

9. A new office was established, headed by a Director at the D-1 level, to include the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit and the Capacity-building Unit, both of which were transferred from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

10. With this change, the functions of monitoring the performance of the contractors and communication with the contractors and their sponsoring States will be further improved. The regulatory management functions will be substantially strengthened, in collaboration with the Office of Legal Affairs, to provide more effective support to the Legal and Technical Commission in developing the associated standards and guidelines to support the regulatory framework for exploitation and the standard operating procedures relating to activities of the contractors.

11. Capacity-building for the developing States has been one key pillar of the work of the Authority. With the establishment of the new office, a centralized approach will be implemented to enhance coordination and collaboration in developing and implementing all training and capacity-building programmes and projects managed by the secretariat, including the contractors' training programmes, training programmes developed by the joint training and research centres and projects funded by the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund. The post of Training Coordinator is maintained, at the P-2 level, and the post of Policy and Planning Officer (Capacity-building), at the P-3 level, is reassigned as an Information and Communications Technology Manager.

### **Financial and budgetary implications**

12. In making these changes, the Secretary-General has been guided by the need to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided by the secretariat and has sought to utilize the talents available in the best possible manner and to the maximum extent. It is noted that further reorganization may be required in the light of the Assembly's consideration and the outcome of the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention.

13. The restructuring of the secretariat outlined by the Secretary-General in the present note has been accomplished within the approved budget for the financial period 2025–2026 and has no financial or budgetary implications. A revised staffing table is shown in the annex to the present document.

## Annex

### Staffing table

<i>Functional title</i>	<i>Professional and higher</i>	<i>National Professional Officer</i>	<i>General Service</i>
<b>Executive Office of the Secretary-General</b>			
Secretary-General	1 (USG)		
Deputy to the Secretary-General/Chef de Cabinet	1 (D-2)		
Communications Specialist	1 (P-4)		
Associate Copy Editor	1 (P-2)		
Office Manager	1 (P-2)		
Senior Liaison Assistant, Office of the Permanent Observer for the International Seabed Authority to the United Nations in New York			1
Senior Communications Assistant			1
Administrative Assistant			1
Staff Assistant			1
<b>Office of Legal Affairs</b>			
Director/Legal Counsel	1 (D-1)		
Senior Legal Officer	1 (P-5)		
Legal Officer	1 (P-4)		
Legal Officer (Regulatory Affairs)	1 (P-4)		
Legal Officer	1 (P-3)		
Knowledge Management Officer	1 (P-3)		
Associate Legal Officer	1 (P-2)		
Documentation and Conference Management Officer		1	
Administrative Assistant			1
Administrative/Library Assistant			1
<b>Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources</b>			
Director	1 (D-1)		
Scientific Affairs Officer (Marine Geologist)	1 (P-4)		
Environmental Coordinator	1 (P-4)		
Programme Coordinator (Marine Scientific Research)	1 (P-4)		
Programme Manager (Marine Environment)	1 (P-4)		
Scientific Officer (Geographic Information System)	1 (P-3)		
Database Manager	1 (P-3)		
Associate Programme Officer	1 (P-2)		
Senior Information Management Assistant			1
Administrative Assistant			1
<b>Office of Contract Management and Capacity-building</b>			
Director	1 (D-1)		
Chief, Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit	1 (P-5)		
Quality Assurance and Compliance Officer	1 (P-4)		
Environmental Audit Officer (from 2026)	1 (P-4)		
Contract Management Officer	1 (P-3)		

<i>Functional title</i>	<i>Professional and higher</i>	<i>National Professional Officer</i>	<i>General Service</i>
Programme Management Officer (Capacity-building)	1 (P-3)		
Training Coordinator	1 (P-2)		
Administrative Assistant			1
<b>Office of Administrative Services</b>			
Head of Office	1 (P-5)		
Budget/Internal Oversight Officer	1 (P-4)		
Finance Officer	1 (P-4)		
Human Resources Officer	1 (P-4)		
Information and Communications Technology Manager	1 (P-3)		
Associate Procurement Officer	1 (P-2)		
Associate Security and Facilities Officer		1	
Senior Budget and Treasury Assistant			1
Senior Finance Assistant			1
Administrative Assistant			1
Budget Assistant			1
Information and Communications Technology Assistant			1
Travel and Human Resources Assistant			1
Human Resources Assistant			1
Finance Assistant			1
Procurement Assistant			1
Driver/General Services Assistant			2
<b>The Enterprise</b>			
Interim Director General	1 (P-5)		
Research Assistant			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>

*Abbreviation:* USG, Under-Secretary-General.



# Assembly

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## Thirtieth session

Kingston, 21–25 July 2025

Agenda item 8

**Annual report of the Secretary-General under article 166,  
paragraph 4, of the Convention**

## **Restructuring of the secretariat of the International Seabed Authority**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

1. The secretariat is one of the principal organs of the Authority. In accordance with article 166 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Authority may require. In accordance with article 167 of the Convention, the staff of the secretariat shall consist of such qualified scientific and technical and other personnel as may be required to fulfil the administrative functions of the Authority. In this regard, the principle of cost-effective and evolutionary approach shall apply to the functioning of the secretariat.

2. It is recalled that a restructuring of the secretariat was conducted by the former Secretary-General, within the approved budget, after he assumed the role in 2017.<sup>1</sup> To ensure optimal service from the secretariat to the Council and the Assembly and their subsidiary organs in alignment with the evolving priorities in implementing the mandate of the Authority and the visions of the new Secretary-General, in particular to enhance the efficiency, transparency, accountability and cost-effectiveness of the work of the secretariat, it is necessary to restructure the secretariat, as done previously, within the approved budget.

3. It is also recalled that the Assembly, at its twenty-ninth session, approved the budget of the Authority for the years 2025 and 2026, with an attached staffing table containing 33 staff in the Professional and higher categories (including the Secretary-General), 2 National Professional Officers and 21 General Service staff, with 1 additional Professional post from 2026.<sup>2</sup> The current changes to the organization of the secretariat as reflected in Secretary-General's bulletin [ISBA/ST/SGB/2025/1](#) were made without any change to the approved number of posts and their levels, and, therefore, without any financial or budgetary implications. The main aspects of the restructuring are described below.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 7 October 2025.

<sup>1</sup> See [ISBA/23/A/4](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [ISBA/29/A/3/Add.1-ISBA/29/C/11/Add.1](#).



**Senior Management Group**

4. The meetings of the Senior Management Group, including all heads of office, have been regularized to be convened weekly by the Secretary-General and, in the absence of the Secretary-General, by the Deputy to the Secretary-General/Chef de Cabinet. The Senior Management Group is composed of the Secretary-General, the Chef de Cabinet and the Directors of offices. The Secretary-General can also invite other staff of the secretariat to attend the meetings of the Senior Management Group on an ad hoc basis and depending on the topics discussed.

**Executive Office of the Secretary-General**

5. The Chef de Cabinet acts as the Deputy to the Secretary-General, at the D-2 level, to support the Secretary-General in all aspects of the secretariat mandate and represent the Secretary-General when requested. The Chef de Cabinet coordinates the work of the secretariat and supervises the daily operation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and of the Office of Administrative Services, with a view to further strengthening the coordination and collaboration among the substantive offices and the administrative office, mobilizing and making optimal use of the financial, human and other resources of the secretariat.

**Office of Legal Affairs**

6. The functions of the Legal Counsel have been assigned at the D-1 level and placed in the Office of Legal Affairs, as has been the case in the past. The post of Knowledge Management Officer, at the P-3 level, vacant since November 2024, will be reassigned as a post of Legal Officer at the same level. Resources are mobilized and prioritized to support the ongoing negotiation of the draft regulations on exploitation and associated standards and guidelines, including the engagement of a legal officer under the Junior Professional Officers programme.

**Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources**

7. The Office of Environmental Management and Mineral Resources has been renamed the Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources in order to better reflect its evolving functions and priorities, in particular the stewardship of the database as the knowledge bank on deep seabed science. The Office will be further strengthened with additional support from a Senior Policy Officer (Mineral Resources and Economic Development) at the P-5 level under the Senior Professional Officers programme. Considering that the post of Senior Scientific Affairs Officer (Marine Geologist) at the P-5 level has been encumbered at the P-4 level for several years, the post was reassigned as a Scientific Affairs Officer (Marine Geologist) at the P-4 level to reflect the fact.

**Office of Contract Management and Capacity-building**

8. A new office was established to include the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit and the Capacity-building Unit, both of which were transferred from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

9. The functions of monitoring the performance of the contractors and communication with the contractors and their sponsoring States will be further improved. The regulatory management functions will be substantially strengthened, in collaboration with the Office of Legal Affairs, to provide more effective support to the Legal and Technical Commission in developing the associated standards and guidelines to support the regulatory framework for exploitation and the standard operating procedures relating to activities of the contractors.



10. Capacity-building for the developing States has been one key pillar of the work of the Authority. With the establishment of the new office, a centralized approach will be implemented to enhance coordination and collaboration in developing and implementing all training and capacity-building programmes and projects managed by the secretariat, including the contractors' training programmes, training programmes developed by the joint training and research centres and projects funded by the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund. The post of Training Coordinator is maintained, at the P-2 level.

#### **Office of Administrative Services**

11. With a view to the optimal use of the limited resources to support the substantive work, the post of Head of the Office of Administrative Services was adjusted from the D-1 to the P-5 level, reporting to the Deputy to the Secretary-General/Chef de Cabinet.

12. It was noted that the secretariat had maintained one information and communications technology team under the Office of Administrative Services and one data management team under the Office of Stewardship, Environment and Resources. With enhanced collaboration and efficiency, the post of Information and Communications Technology Manager (P-4), vacant since May 2024, was reassigned as an Information and Communications Technology Manager at the P-3 level. The post of the Associate Information and Communications Technology Officer at the P-2 level, vacant since January 2025, was abolished.

#### **Financial and budgetary implications**

13. In making these changes, the Secretary-General has been guided by the need to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided by the secretariat. In restructuring the secretariat, the Secretary-General has sought to utilize the talents available in the best possible manner and to the maximum extent. It is noted that further reorganization may be required in the light of evolving priorities and in the light of the Assembly's consideration and the outcome of the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention.

14. The restructuring of the secretariat outlined by the Secretary-General in the present note has been accomplished within the approved budget for the financial period 2025–2026 and has no financial or budgetary implications. A revised staffing table is shown in the annex to the present document.

## Annex

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Legal Officer	1 (P-3)		
Associate Legal Officer	1 (P-2)		
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Administrative Assistant			1
Administrative/Library Assistant			1
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Programme Manager (Marine Environment)	1 (P-4)		
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Associate Programme Officer	1 (P-2)		
Senior Information Management Assistant			1
Administrative Assistant			1
<b>Office of Contract Management and Capacity-building</b>			
Director	1 (D-1)		
Chief, Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit	1 (P-5)		
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Environmental Audit Officer (from 2026)	1 (P-4)		
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<i>Functional title</i>	<i>Professional and higher</i>	<i>National Professional Officer</i>	<i>General Service</i>
Training Coordinator	1 (P-2)		
Administrative Assistant			1
<b>Office of Administrative Services</b>			
Head of Office	1 (P-5)		
Budget/Internal Oversight Officer	1 (P-4)		
Finance Officer	1 (P-4)		
Human Resources Officer	1 (P-4)		
Information and Communications Technology Manager	1 (P-3)		
Associate Procurement Officer	1 (P-2)		
Associate Security and Facilities Officer		1	
Senior Budget and Treasury Assistant			1
Senior Finance Assistant			1
Administrative Assistant			1
Budget Assistant			1
Information and Communications Technology Assistant			1
Travel and Human Resources Assistant			1
Human Resources Assistant			1
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### Thirtieth session

Kingston, 7–25 July 2025

Item 12 of the provisional agenda of the Assembly\*

### Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee

Agenda item 17 of the Council

### Report of the Finance Committee

## Report of the Finance Committee

### I. Introduction

1. During the thirtieth session of the International Seabed Authority, the Finance Committee held six formal meetings from 2 to 4 July 2025. In addition, in keeping with its established practice, the Committee held informal webinars on 11 April and 20 June 2025, during which members of the Committee were briefed on the issues to be discussed in the formal session.

2. The following members of the Committee participated in the formal meetings: Anastasia Francilia Akubor, Chaohong Xing, Didier Ortolland, Jens Benninghofen, Kenneth Wong, Medard Ainomuhisha, Sergey Litvinov, Shoko Fujimoto, Solomon Korbieh and Thiago Poggio Padua. Christopher Hilton and Khurshed Alam resigned on 31 March and 18 June 2025, respectively.

3. On 2 July 2025, the Committee adopted its agenda ([ISBA/30/FC/1](#)) and elected Kenneth Wong as Chair and Anastasia Francilia Akubor as Vice-Chair.

### II. Implementation of the budget for the financial period 2023–2024

4. The Committee was provided with a report on the implementation of the budget for the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024. According to the report, total expenditure for the period amounted to \$22,697,081, against an approved budget provision of \$22,712,940, resulting in underexpenditure of \$15,859. The report indicated overexpenditure under administrative costs, due primarily to increases in common staff costs and salaries for established posts. These overruns were partially offset by underexpenditure on conference services, particularly in documentation, and across several programme areas due to reduced travel and workshops. The Committee took note of the report and reiterated its request to take appropriate measures to avoid budget overruns during the financial period 2025–2026. The Committee requested the

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\* [ISBA/30/A/L.1/Rev.1](#).



secretariat to provide an update on the staffing tables regarding staff as well as a breakdown of consultants.

5. The Committee was provided with the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel ([ISBA/30/FC/2](#)), submitted pursuant to Assembly decision [ISBA/29/A/11](#). The Committee noted that the Authority's travel policies are generally consistent with United Nations standards, including the dual threshold for business class travel. It took note of the detailed breakdown of travel costs for the 2023–2024 financial period, which included 101 staff missions (\$500,159), 63 entitlement trips (\$520,873), 109 expert and delegate trips (\$221,201) and 13 consultant trips (\$32,719). A total of 81 air tickets (\$161,062) were funded through voluntary trust funds.

6. The Committee took note of structural and market-related challenges affecting the effective management of travel costs. In particular, it observed that, due to cost constraints, the secretariat does not participate in the United Nations Umoja enterprise resource planning system and currently operates without a dedicated travel module, necessitating manual processing of all travel, which is resource intensive. The Committee also acknowledged that limited competition within the Jamaican travel market and monopolistic conditions on key routes restrict the Authority's ability to negotiate favourable fares. In light of a significant rise in air travel costs over recent years, the Committee noted that staff members have limited incentives to opt for lump sum travel options. While the adoption of a single threshold for business class travel, as recommended by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, could simplify administrative procedures, the Committee considered that such a change would likely result in only marginal savings.

7. The Committee encouraged continued efforts to improve cost-effectiveness in travel procurement and requested the secretariat to keep this matter as a standing item on the agenda of the Committee's meetings.

8. The Committee discussed paragraph 19 of its report on its twenty-ninth session ([ISBA/29/A/9–ISBA/29/C/20](#)) regarding the reclassification of posts within the secretariat. The Committee reiterated its recommendation that, in future, no reclassification decision be implemented without prior approval of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Committee.

9. The Committee conducted a debate on the note by the Secretary-General contained in document [ISBA/30/A/7](#) regarding the restructuring of the secretariat and exchanged views on the legal framework and condition of the restructuring situation, without coming to a conclusion.

10. The Committee enquired about ongoing litigation before the Joint Appeals Board and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal. The secretariat provided an update and an overview of potential financial scenarios, while noting the confidential nature of the proceedings. The Committee took note of the information and will be kept informed of the outcomes as the legal processes are concluded.

### **III. Status of the Working Capital Fund**

11. On 2 July, the Committee considered a report on the status of the Working Capital Fund. As at 31 May 2025, the balance of the Fund stood at \$760,186, with a remaining amount of \$64,814 to be collected during the financial periods 2025–2026 and 2027–2028. It was recalled that the Assembly had approved an increase of \$75,000 in 2024, bringing the Fund's ceiling to \$825,000, with the increase to be collected in two equal instalments over the next two financial periods. The Committee took note of the report.

#### **IV. Status of contributions and related matters**

12. On 2 July, the Committee considered a report on the status of contributions and related matters. The Committee noted that, as at 31 May 2025, 64 per cent of the assessed contributions to the budget of the Authority for 2025, amounting to \$6,872,991, had been received. As at that date, 57 member States had paid in full and 10 had made partial payments. Contributions outstanding from member States for the current financial period totalled \$3,835,509. In addition, the Committee noted that outstanding contributions from previous financial periods (1998–2024) amounted to \$599,656. The Committee expressed concern that 43 member States were in arrears for two years or more and noted that 6 of those States had never made any contribution since becoming parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with a total outstanding amount of \$84,898.

13. The Committee appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General to follow up on unpaid contributions through regular notices, bilateral engagement and awareness-raising, and encouraged continued efforts in this regard, including efforts through coordinators of each regional group, particularly with respect to States that have never contributed to the budget of the Authority.

14. The Committee took note of the request of the Assembly contained in paragraph 52 of document [ISBA/29/A/15](#) to define criteria and a process for the assessment of the conditions to allow the Assembly to exercise its discretionary functions under article 184 of the Convention and decided to report to the Assembly in this regard during the thirty-first session.

#### **V. Status of overhead charges for the administration and supervision of contracts for exploration and their reflection of costs actually and reasonably incurred**

15. On 2 July, the Committee took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of overhead charges for the administration and supervision of contracts for exploration ([ISBA/30/FC/3](#)). The Committee recalled that overhead charges were initially introduced in 2013 and have been periodically adjusted to reflect actual and reasonably incurred costs. The current overhead charge stands at \$80,000 per contract.

16. The Committee noted that, as of 2025, the Authority manages 30 active exploration contracts. Based on a revised cost assessment methodology, the total cost for administering and supervising those contracts was estimated at \$3,089,833, which includes direct staff costs, contractor engagement activities, costs related to Council and Legal and Technical Commission meetings and indirect overheads. This equates to \$102,994 per contract.

17. Considering the need to ensure that overhead charges are aligned with actual costs incurred and the timeline that may be required for the contractors to properly schedule the budget for the increase, the Committee decided to recommend that the annual overhead charge be adjusted to \$100,000 per contract, effective 1 January 2027.

#### **VI. Audit report on the accounts of the Authority for 2024**

18. On 2 July, the Committee considered the audited financial statements of the Authority for 2024.<sup>1</sup> The Committee noted that, in the opinion of the auditor, the

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ISA-Financial-Statements-2024.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ISA-Financial-Statements-2024.pdf).

financial statements gave a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 December 2024, and of its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards. No adverse observations were made by the auditor. The Committee requested the secretariat to provide a breakdown of the use of the miscellaneous and interest income.

## **VII. Appointment of an independent auditor for the financial period 2025–2026**

19. On 2 July, the Committee considered the note by the secretariat on the appointment of an independent auditor for the financial period 2025–2026. It was recalled that CalvertGordon Associates had been appointed as the external auditor for the period 2023–2024. For the 2025–2026 period, the secretariat invited six internationally recognized auditing firms with offices in Kingston to submit bids. Of these, two firms, including CalvertGordon Associates, submitted proposals. The financial proposals received were within the budget provision of \$42,000 for the period.

20. In view of the satisfactory performance of CalvertGordon Associates during the 2023–2024 financial period and the competitive cost of their services, and with a view to completing a four-year audit cycle with the current auditor, the Committee recommended the reappointment of CalvertGordon Associates for the financial period 2025–2026.

## **VIII. Status of the trust funds of the Authority and related matters**

21. On 2 July, the Committee took note of the updated financial status of the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund, which, as at 31 May 2025, held a balance of \$1,025,679; the trust fund for extrabudgetary support held a balance of \$567,669. It also noted that both the voluntary trust fund for the participation of members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee from developing countries and the voluntary trust fund to support the participation of members of the Council from developing States had negative balances after providing financial support to members of the Commission, the Committee and the Council for their participation in the meetings of the second part of the thirtieth session.

22. The Committee reiterated the critical role of the voluntary trust funds in supporting the participation of members and representatives from developing countries in the work of the Authority and encouraged further contributions from member States and other stakeholders.

## **IX. Development of rules, regulations and procedures on the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area pursuant to section 9, paragraph 7 (f), of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982**

23. The Committee recalled that, during its twenty-sixth to twenty-ninth sessions, it had engaged in extensive discussions aimed at identifying a suitable mechanism for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area pursuant to section 9, paragraph 7 (f), of the annex to the Agreement

relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention (1994 Agreement). At the twenty-eighth session, in 2023, the Committee discussed the proposal of the Secretary-General for the establishment of a seabed sustainability fund as an alternative or adjunct to the direct distribution of monetary benefits. With a view to further discussing the topic, the Committee developed a tentative draft of the objectives of the fund, proposing that it be referred to as the Common Heritage Fund (initially proposed as the seabed sustainability fund) (see [ISBA/29/FC/2](#), annex). The Fund was built upon the results of the Authority's technical study No. 31, published in May 2022, on the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits from deep seabed mining, which was conducted under the supervision of the Committee.

24. The Committee also recalled that, at its twenty-ninth session, in 2024, it exchanged views on the establishment of a Common Heritage Fund as an alternative or complement to the direct distribution of monetary benefits, and had agreed to continue deliberations in light of ongoing discussions on benefit-sharing arrangements.

25. In preparation for the thirtieth session, the secretariat engaged Dale Squires to prepare a report on the fair, equitable, efficient and just sharing of royalties from deep seabed mining. A dedicated intersessional webinar was held on 20 June, during which Mr. Squires presented his findings, which included a reference to the United Nations multidimensional vulnerability index, and responded to questions from Committee members. On 3 July, the Committee was formally notified of the report. The Committee took note of the report and continued its discussions on the way forward regarding the mechanism for benefit-sharing. During the discussions, a member submitted for information purposes an additional formula on the direct distribution of monetary benefits.

26. Following the discussion, the Committee recommended to the Council and the Assembly that the secretariat develop the concept of the Common Heritage Fund as a way for distribution of income from activities in the Area to be shared in accordance with articles 140, 148 and 160, paragraph 2 (g), as prescribed in article 173 of the Convention. The concept should be accompanied by a comprehensive report describing and explaining the concept and detailing, inter alia: (a) the legal rules applicable to the Fund, specifically the articles of the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority which may regulate, limit or restrict the usage or application of the Fund's resources; (b) an estimate of the resources necessary at the Authority for the management of the Fund consistent with the evolutionary approach; (c) the governance structure applicable to the operation of the Fund; and (d) whether and how the payments or contributions pursuant to article 82 of the Convention could be administered by the Fund, taking into account the interests and needs of developing States, particularly the least developed countries and landlocked countries.

## **X. Other matters**

27. On 3 July, the Committee noted that San Marino had become a member of the Authority on 19 July 2024, following its accession to the Convention (see [ISBA/30/FC/4](#)). In accordance with financial regulations 6.9 and 7, the secretariat calculated that the assessed contributions of San Marino to the administrative budget for 2024 and 2025 were \$405 and \$1,061, respectively, and its advances to the Working Capital Fund were \$1.02 and \$1.88. The Committee recommended that the Assembly approve the proposed assessments and advance contributions.



## **XI. Recommendations of the Finance Committee**

28. In view of the foregoing, the Committee recommends that the Council and the Assembly:

(a) Approve the increase of the annual overhead charge for the administration and supervision of contracts for exploration to \$100,000 per contract, effective 1 January 2027;

(b) Appoint CalvertGordon Associates as the external auditor of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026;

(c) Decide that, in respect of San Marino, which became a member of the Authority in 2024, the rate of assessment and the amounts of contribution to the General Administrative Fund and the Working Capital Fund shall be as reflected in paragraph 27 of the present report;

(d) Recommend that the secretariat develop the concept of the Common Heritage Fund as a way for distribution of income from activities in the Area to be shared in accordance with articles 140, 148 and 160, paragraph 2 (g), as prescribed in article 173 of the Convention; the concept should be accompanied by a comprehensive report describing and explaining the concept and detailing, inter alia:

(i) The legal rules applicable to the Fund and specifically the articles of the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority which may regulate, limit or restrict the usage or application of the Fund's resources;

(ii) An estimate of the resources necessary at the Authority for the management of the Fund consistent with the evolutionary approach;

(iii) The governance structure applicable to the operation of the Fund;

(iv) Whether and how the payments or contributions pursuant to article 82 of the Convention could be administered by the Fund, taking into account the interests and needs of developing States, particularly the least developed countries and landlocked countries;

(e) Appeal to members of the Authority, including those members with contributions in arrears for the period 1998–2024, to pay outstanding contributions to the budget of the Authority as soon as possible, to enable the Authority to deliver effectively on its mandate, and request the Secretary-General to continue her efforts to recover those arrears, including bilateral efforts;

(f) Express its appreciation to the donors that have made contributions to the voluntary trust funds of the Authority, and encourage members, observers, contractors and other stakeholders to contribute financially to the trust funds;

(g) Reiterate its recommendation that, in the future, no reclassification decision be implemented without prior approval of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.



# Assembly

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## Thirtieth session

Kingston, 21–25 July 2025

Agenda item 12

### Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee

## Decision of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority relating to financial and budgetary matters

*The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Taking into account* the recommendations of the Council of the International Seabed Authority,<sup>1</sup>

1. *Approves* the increase of the annual overhead charge for the administration and supervision of contracts for exploration to \$100,000 per contract, effective 1 January 2027;

2. *Appoints* CalvertGordon Associates as the external auditor of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026;

3. *Decides* that, in respect of San Marino, which became a member of the Authority in 2024, the rate of assessment and the amounts of contribution to the General Administrative Fund and the Working Capital Fund shall be as recommended in paragraph 27 of the report of the Finance Committee;

4. *Recommends* that the secretariat develop the concept of the Common Heritage Fund as one of the possible ways for distribution of income from activities in the Area to be shared in accordance with articles 140, 148 and 160, paragraph (2)(g), as prescribed in article 173 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,<sup>2</sup> and that the concept should be accompanied by a comprehensive report describing and explaining the concept and detailing, inter alia:

(a) The legal rules applicable to the Fund and specifically the articles of the Convention, the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982<sup>3</sup> and the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority which may regulate, limit or restrict the usage or application of the Fund's resources;

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<sup>1</sup> See [ISBA/30/C/16](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1836, No. 31364.



(b) An estimate of the resources necessary at the Authority for the management of the Fund consistent with the evolutionary approach;

(c) The governance structure applicable to the operation of the Fund;

(d) Whether and how the payments or contributions pursuant to article 82 of the Convention could be administered by the Fund, taking into account the interests and needs of developing States, particularly the least developed countries and landlocked countries;

5. *Appeals* to members of the Authority, including those members with contributions in arrears for the period 1998–2024, to pay outstanding contributions to the budget of the Authority as soon as possible, to enable the Authority to deliver effectively on its mandate, and requests the Secretary-General to continue her efforts to recover those arrears, including bilateral efforts;

6. *Expresses its appreciation* to the donors that have made contributions to the voluntary trust funds of the Authority, and encourages members, observers, contractors and other stakeholders to contribute financially to the trust funds;

7. *Reiterates its request* that, in the future, no reclassification decision be implemented without prior approval of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

*218th meeting  
22 July 2025*

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# Assembly

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## Thirtieth session

Kingston, 21–25 July 2025

Agenda item 11

### Commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Seabed Authority

## Decision of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority on the designation of 1 November as the International Day of the Deep Seabed

*The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Celebrating* the thirtieth anniversary of the International Seabed Authority, which was established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (the Convention),<sup>1</sup>

*Recalling* the inspirational speech delivered by Ambassador Arvid Pardo on 1 November 1967 before the United Nations General Assembly for the legal regime applicable to the common heritage of humankind as a whole,

*Acknowledging* the importance of the mandate entrusted to the International Seabed Authority by the Convention and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982,<sup>2</sup> as the organization through which States Parties shall organize and control activities in the Area,

*Highlighting* the importance of building deep-sea literacy to raise awareness of the legal regime to govern all activities regarding exploration for and exploitation of the resources of the Area, which are the common heritage of humankind as a whole, as well as the role of the Authority in advancing deep-sea research and in leveraging the capacity-building activities of the Authority,

*Noting* the need to accelerate investment in science and technology to advance global knowledge and understanding of the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole,

1. *Decides* to proclaim 1 November as the International Day of the Deep Seabed, to be observed annually;

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1836, No. 31364.



2. *Stresses* that the cost of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the present decision should be met by voluntary contributions and that such activities would be subject to the availability and provision of voluntary contributions;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to bring the present decision to the attention of all members of the International Seabed Authority, observers and contractors of the International Seabed Authority, the scientific community, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations and private persons for appropriate observance.

*220th meeting  
23 July 2025*

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# Assembly

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## Thirtieth session

Kingston, 21–25 July 2025

### **Statement by the President on the work of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority at its thirtieth session**

1. The thirtieth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston from 21 to 25 July 2025, immediately after the closing of the Council session on 21 July.

#### **I. Adoption of the agenda**

2. At its 216th meeting, on 21 July, the Assembly adopted the agenda of its thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/A/1](#)).

3. At the opening of the session, the Special Envoy of the President of France for the Third United Nations Ocean Conference and Ambassador for the Poles and Maritime Issues, Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, delivered remarks on the Conference, which was co-hosted by France and Costa Rica in Nice, France, from 9 to 13 June 2025. He stated that the abyss was not for sale and proposed that a major scientific forum, “Magic Abyssal 2026”, be organized in Kingston in 2026. The delegation of China made a general statement on commitment to multilateralism to put an end to unilateral actions and maintain a fair and just international order, underscoring that the international seabed regime was a cornerstone of the law of the sea and of multilateralism, which it was the shared responsibility and sacred mission of the international community to safeguard. The delegation of the Russian Federation delivered a statement in which it reiterated that all activities in the Area were subordinate to the principle of the common heritage of humankind and that unilateral steps were in violation of the legal regime under Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and undermined the mandate of the Authority.

#### **II. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly**

4. At the 216th meeting, Dwight Gardiner (Antigua and Barbuda) was elected President, by acclamation.

5. At the same meeting, the representatives of Fiji (Asia-Pacific States), Ghana (African States) and the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Western European and other States) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Assembly for the thirtieth session, by acclamation.



### **III. Appointment and report of the Credentials Committee**

6. At its 216th meeting, the Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee, consisting of the following eight members: Bahamas (The), Dominican Republic, Ireland, Kuwait, Nauru, Switzerland, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

7. The Credentials Committee met on 23 July and elected Miguel Balaguer (Dominican Republic) as its Chair. The Committee examined the credentials of representatives participating in the thirtieth session.

8. At the 223rd meeting, on 25 July, the Chair of the Credentials Committee presented the report of the Committee ([ISBA/30/A/10](#)). At the same meeting, the report was approved by the Assembly (see [ISBA/30/A/12](#)).

### **IV. Election to fill vacancies on the Finance Committee**

9. At its 216th meeting, the Assembly elected, by acclamation, Lee-Anne Yarr (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) for the remainder of the term of Christopher Hilton (United Kingdom), Yedla Umasankar (India) for the remainder of the term of Kajal Bhat (India) and Sheikh Mahmudul Hassan (Bangladesh) for the remainder of the term of Khurshed Alam (Bangladesh), respectively, for terms ending on 31 December 2027 (see [ISBA/30/A/3](#), [ISBA/30/A/9](#) and [ISBA/30/A/6](#)).

### **V. Requests for observer status in the Assembly**

10. At its 216th meeting, in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (d), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, the Assembly considered four applications for observer status from the following applicants: Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission ([ISBA/30/A/INF/6](#)), International Copper Study Group ([ISBA/30/A/INF/7](#)), International Lead and Zinc Study Group ([ISBA/30/A/INF/8](#)) and International Nickel Study Group ([ISBA/30/A/INF/9](#)). The Assembly granted observer status to all applicants.

11. At the same meeting, in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly and the guidelines for observer status of non-governmental organizations with the Authority (see [ISBA/25/A/16](#)), the Assembly considered nine applications for observer status from the following applicants: International Manganese Institute ([ISBA/30/A/INF/1](#)), Cobalt Institute ([ISBA/30/A/INF/2](#)), Earth Law Center ([ISBA/30/A/INF/3](#)), Ocean and Us ([ISBA/30/A/INF/4](#)), Kōrero o te Ōrau ([ISBA/30/A/INF/5](#)), China Oceanic Development Foundation ([ISBA/30/A/INF/10](#)), World Resources Institute ([ISBA/30/A/INF/11](#)), Seafloor Mineral Developers Association ([ISBA/30/A/INF/12](#)) and Oceano Azul Foundation ([ISBA/30/A/INF/13](#)). The Assembly granted observer status to all applicants except the Seafloor Mineral Developers Association.

12. At its 225th meeting, on 25 July, following consultations facilitated by the delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands regarding the request for observer status submitted by the Seafloor Mineral Developers Association pursuant to rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, the Assembly decided to defer its consideration to the next session. It was agreed that contractors could participate as observers in their individual capacity and not be treated differently from other stakeholders. Contractors were invited to submit requests for observer status to be granted by the Assembly. For that purpose, the Assembly requested that the secretariat prepare guidelines for observer status of contractors with the Authority, including a comparison with the rules of procedure of other intergovernmental

organizations such as the International Maritime Organization, to assist in the consideration of applications for observer status to be submitted by contractors from 2026. The Assembly also decided to include the item in its agenda for the next session and that it was unnecessary to amend the Assembly's rules of procedure.

## **VI. Annual report of the Secretary-General**

13. At the 218th meeting, on 22 July, the Secretary-General presented her annual report submitted in accordance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention ([ISBA/30/A/2](#)). Under the same agenda item, she reported on the restructuring of the secretariat (see [ISBA/30/A/7/Rev.1](#)) and the implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (see [ISBA/30/A/4](#)).

14. During the 218th and 221st to 223rd meetings, on 22, 24 and 25 July, the Assembly held a general debate on the reports of the Secretary-General. One regional group, 43 members of the Authority and 11 observers made statements. These included statements by the President of Palau, Surangel S. Whipps Jr., and the Minister of the Environment of Panama, Juan Carlos Navarro.

15. Most delegations commended the Secretary-General for her comprehensive first annual report to the Assembly, occurring in a global context marked by profound changes, challenges and interests for strategic minerals. Most delegations welcomed her commitment to enhancing the efficiency, transparency and accountability of the secretariat.

16. Most delegations reaffirmed their attachment to multilateralism and the regime of the common heritage of humankind, which represents the legal and moral compass of the Authority, and their unwavering support for the Authority at a critical juncture in the governance of the Area and its resources.

17. Most delegations welcomed the considerable progress made by the Council during the thirtieth session regarding the draft regulations on exploitation and underscored the importance of finalizing a robust and enforceable framework in a timely and realistic manner to deliver on the Authority's regulatory mandate. Reference was made to the need for serious consideration of the potential consequences if the Authority remains unable to adopt regulations on exploitation.

18. Most delegations welcomed the progress made in marine scientific research, capacity-building and the operationalization of the Enterprise, as these reflect the Authority's dual mandate as both a regulator and a promoter of equitable participation in the Area's resources, with decisions informed by solid scientific information.

19. Most delegations welcomed the significant progress made in marine scientific research, particularly developments achieved through partnerships. These included the expansion and enhanced accessibility of environmental data hosted by DeepData, which were integrated into the Ocean Data and Information System coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization in May 2025. Delegations also expressed appreciation for collaborative scientific initiatives such as the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative, which launched a second call in March 2025, with support from Ireland, aimed at describing approximately 100 new species by 2026. Broad support was expressed for the Authority's role as a convener and catalyst in promoting scientific knowledge generation, capacity-building and technology transfer for developing States. The contributions of contractors in generating and advancing scientific knowledge were also acknowledged. Reference was made to the workshop on advanced technologies for the protection and sustainable use of the Area,



co-organized with Kobe University in June 2025, which was seen as a valuable forum for knowledge exchange. Delegations emphasized the importance of establishing environmental threshold values under the leadership of the Legal and Technical Commission, with input from a global group of experts. Further reference was made to the Deep-sea Biobank Initiative, supported by the Republic of Korea, which is aimed at facilitating global access to deep-sea biological samples and genetic data from the Area for the benefit of all humankind. Delegations encouraged the development of standard operating procedures for the collection, processing and dissemination of such samples and data, ensuring that the process remains timely, inclusive and transparent.

20. Several delegations recalled that the full operationalization of the Enterprise remained a strategic imperative and the principal mechanism for ensuring the participation of developing States in activities in the Area.

21. Several delegations welcomed the growing number of permanent missions to the Authority and encouraged member States that had not yet become a party to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention (1994 Agreement) to do so, emphasizing that this would provide an important signal of trust in multilateralism and in the architecture set up by the Convention for the governance of the common heritage of humankind. Several delegations took note of the urgent need for coastal States to fulfil their obligation under article 84 of the Convention.

22. Several delegations noted with appreciation the Authority's increased engagement with developing States, including the Deep Dive e-learning platform, the launch of scientific research activities under the International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre and the creation of the African Academy for Deep Sea Diplomacy in Cameroon.

23. Several delegations took note of the restructuring of the secretariat and sought clarification on the balance between established staff and consultants while encouraging efforts to stabilize staffing and ensure a well-resourced Authority through recruitment for authorized posts and continued evaluation of staffing needs in accordance with the Authority's work, particularly in anticipation of future regulatory responsibilities. Some delegations stressed that transparency should be consolidated as a cross-cutting principle in all functions of the secretariat and that institutional management should be inspired by the best practices of intergovernmental organizations, with an organizational culture based on merit, inclusion, gender balance and geographical diversity.

24. Most delegations commended efforts on gender parity, particularly through the pilot phase of the See Her Exceed mentorship programme, and called upon Member States and stakeholders to support the initiative and ensure its long-term outcomes.

25. Several delegations commented on the financial sustainability of the Authority and commended the cost recovery mechanism applied to contractors, and urged all member States to honour their financial obligations. They also emphasized the critical role of the voluntary trust funds in supporting the participation of developing States and that of members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee from developing States.

26. Most delegations underscored the imperative for a robust regulatory framework that ensures the protection of the global ocean commons, both an environmental obligation and a cultural necessity owing to interconnectedness with the oceans for many Pacific cultures. While supporting the need for robust environmental safeguards and science-based decision-making, several delegations cautioned against indefinite blanket measures that might inadvertently limit the rights of developing States.

27. Most delegations welcomed capacity-building initiatives and programmes as a core aspect of the work of the Authority. Reference was made to the first International Seabed Authority-Caribbean Community workshop on developing an action plan for capacity-building in deep-sea mining research, which was hosted by Antigua and Barbuda in November 2024. Reference was also made to the International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre, which had already trained over 100 students from more than 40 countries. Many delegations encouraged further funding for the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund and for the Authority's other capacity-building tools and programmes. Reference was also made to the project "Women in Blue: training opportunities in ocean science", which would culminate in dispatching research crews aboard the National Research Council of Italy vessel *Gaia Blu* from 1 to 7 August 2025. The secretariat was encouraged to take forward the network of national focal points for capacity development and the International Seabed Authority Capacity Development Alumni Network as key to building a strong community of experts.

28. With regard to capacity development and in response to concerns from some member States, the Secretary-General addressed both the Authority's general training initiatives and the distinct contractors' training programme, which was designed under the Convention for the benefit of developing member States. The Secretary-General recalled that, in accordance with the recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States relating to training programmes under plans of work for exploration ([ISBA/19/LTC/14/Rev.1](#)), the essential nature of the contractors' training programme was to provide personnel from developing States with direct, hands-on participation in all facets of marine exploration, including at-sea training and access to advanced laboratories. Such training programmes may be revised and developed from time to time as necessary by mutual agreement. On this basis, the Secretary-General explained her decision to place under review the use of the secretariat's Deep Dive and national expert deployment programmes by contractors to fulfil their training obligations. She clarified her belief that contractors must develop their own tailored programmes in consultation with the secretariat, with the needs of developing member States in mind. She reported that the secretariat had already successfully renegotiated new training plans with most of the affected contractors. Furthermore, she clarified that, while these programmes were no longer options for contractors, platforms such as the Deep Dive e-learning platform would continue to be offered free of charge directly to candidates from developing member States. As for the national expert deployment programme, it remains an option for projects under the Partnership Fund or those financed by member States. Guided by experience, the focus of capacity development is now broadening to strategically strengthen the capacity of national institutions, aiming for a long-term, multiplier effect that extends beyond individual expertise.

29. The Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General and requested her to continue her efforts to mobilize the resources and partnerships necessary for advancing the implementation of the strategic research priorities under the action plan. The Assembly encouraged all members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and individuals to contribute to the implementation of the action plan.

30. With regard to the reporting period, it was agreed that an addendum to the report, with updates, would be prepared closer to its consideration by the Assembly in 2026 and that the next report would cover activities carried out over the period from 1 April to 31 March 2026. The Secretary-General also confirmed that the months of May, June and July 2024 would be reported on in an addendum to the annual report. It was agreed that the next report of the Secretary-General would contain a list of contractors

at risk of non-compliance, if any had been identified by the Legal and Technical Commission.

## **VII. Periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention**

31. During the twenty-eighth session, the Assembly included the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention as an item on the agenda of its twenty-ninth session, with a view to adopting a decision thereon (see [ISBA/28/A/16](#)). During the twenty-ninth session, in light of the divergence of views that had been expressed, the Assembly decided to defer its consideration of the question of the periodic review to the thirtieth session.

32. At its 224th meeting, on 25 July, the Assembly considered the second periodic review under article 154 of the Convention since its establishment on the basis of the draft decision of the Assembly on the second periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention, with terms of reference for the review in its annex ([ISBA/30/A/L.2](#)).

33. Divergent views continued to be expressed on the conduct of the periodic review and the burden on resources that it places at a time when efforts are geared towards the adoption of regulations on exploitation. Some favoured the review to be conducted more appropriately after the adoption of the regulations and the assessment of their content on the manner in which the regime would operate. In contrast, while noting that the undertaking of the periodic review was not conditional on the workload of the Authority, and ascertaining the existence of resources for this, several delegations expressed support for the conduct of the review, which would have built on the process and outcomes of the first periodic review.

34. The Assembly did not reach consensus on the proposal for conducting the periodic review, and decided to defer its consideration of the question to the thirty-first session.

## **VIII. Report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise**

35. The Assembly welcomed the report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise ([ISBA/30/A/5-ISBA/30/C/8](#)), as orally amended, which provided details of the Enterprise's activities during the reporting period. In general, Member States expressed appreciation for the progress made towards the eventual independent functioning of the Enterprise, particularly in the areas of governance, operational planning and outreach.

36. Delegations commended the interim Director General for actively participating in the negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation. Several delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Enterprise's unique role and legal framework are properly reflected in the regulations, particularly concerning its status compared with private contractors.

37. Delegations also noted with appreciation the efforts of the interim Director General regarding the assessment of technological developments relevant to activities in the Area, in particular technology relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment, and highlighted the side event co-hosted by the Enterprise and Impossible Metals, Inc., on artificial intelligence-driven robotics technology for the environmentally sustainable collection of nodules.

38. There was significant interest in the section of the report on funding, especially the progress made in exploring opportunities for joint ventures. Delegations took note of the statement of interest from Impossible Metals, Inc. Many emphasized that developing “sound commercial principles” for such ventures was a crucial next step. Delegations also welcomed the ongoing dialogue with sponsoring States and contractors, recognizing that such collaboration was vital for the Enterprise’s future financial stability.

39. Delegations also expressed support for the letter of cooperation with the British Institute of International and Comparative Law and the resulting scholarship awarded to a research assistant. Delegations viewed this as a concrete example of the Enterprise’s commitment to capacity-building, particularly for developing States, and encouraged similar partnerships.

40. Some delegations reiterated concerns about the uncertainty surrounding the adoption of regulations on exploitation. They noted that such uncertainty was a significant obstacle for potential partners and could hinder the Enterprise’s ability to secure joint ventures and begin independent operations. The interim Director General recalled paragraph 22 of his report and assured delegations that he would continue to work with sponsoring States, contractors and other entities to conclude a joint venture arrangement with the Enterprise, in accordance with section 2, paragraph 2, of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, as it was one of the triggers that would result in the independent functioning of the Enterprise. He emphasized, however, that the conclusion and adoption of regulations on exploitation rested with the Council, calling on delegations to work towards that objective in keeping with the timeline set by the Council.

41. The Assembly’s response was supportive and the foundational work done by the interim Director General was recognized. The feedback reinforced the need for a clear and stable regulatory framework to enable the Enterprise to fulfil its mandate of carrying out deep-seabed mining activities and facilitating the participation of developing States.

## **IX. Commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Authority**

42. The Assembly held a one-day special event at its 219th and 220th meetings, on 23 July, to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Authority. In his opening address, the President of the Assembly underscored the crucial role of the Authority in shaping the future of ocean governance and multilateralism in keeping with its mandate.

43. The special session was also a time to reflect on current challenges for the Authority in the discharge of its mandate under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, as well as an opportunity for stakeholders to proffer suggestions on the way forward for the next phase of the work of the Authority.

44. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Kamina Smith, reiterated the unwavering support of the host country to the Authority, while highlighting its importance, especially for large ocean developing States.

45. In a statement, the President of Palau reflected on what had been achieved, what remained to be done and the vision that had brought the Authority into existence, honouring the legacies of Arvid Pardo and Elisabeth Mann Borgese.

46. The Secretary-General of the Authority, evoking the words of Mr. Pardo in 1967, recalled the importance of the Authority in preventing the decision of a few from affecting the status of the Area as the common heritage of all humankind.

47. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was delivered by the valedictorian of St. George's School in Kingston, Henrique Hibbert, in which the Secretary-General noted that the Authority was a cornerstone in the governance of the ocean commons.

48. In a video message, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, Elinor Hammar skjöld, underscored the pivotal role of the Authority in implementing the Part XI legal regime and in achieving the objectives of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

49. In a video message, the President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Tomas Heidar, reflected on the important role of the Seabed Disputes Chamber, as demonstrated by the advisory opinion of 2011 clarifying the responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring entities with respect to activities in the Area.

50. In a video statement, the President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Tommy Koh, highlighted the dangers of the polarization of views between the pros and cons of exploitation, together with challenges presented by the submission by a subsidiary of The Metals Company of an application for a recovery permit with the authorities of the United States of America for mining in the Area while the Authority is vested with the exclusive mandate to regulate and approve the exploitation of minerals in the Area. He cautioned that the Authority had yet to adopt the regulations on exploitation and that The Metals Company's application was a reminder to expedite that process and find compromises without which Mr. Pardo's vision of harvesting the common heritage of humankind for the benefit of all countries, especially developing countries, would remain a dream.

51. Another key highlight of the proceeding was the panel on historic reflections and architecture for shaping the future, composed of former Presidents of the Assembly, which was testament to the continuity of focus and discharge of the Authority's mandate. The panel was composed of Olav Myklebust (Norway, President in 2005), Sainivalati S. Navoti (Fiji, President in 2006), Vladimir Polenov (Russian Federation, President in 2013) and Eugénio João Muianga (Mozambique, President in 2017), with a message from Helmut Türk, (Austria, President in 2015). It was moderated by Philomène Verlaan (Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Sea). Panellists reflected on achievements during their presidencies in the discharge of the Authority's mandate.

52. The Assembly welcomed the synthesis and reflections of the Deep Sea Dialogues, which focused on scientific, economic and legal aspects of the Authority's mandate. The panel was composed of Diva Amon (University of California, Santa Barbara), Pradeep Singh (Oceano Azul Foundation) and Rashid Sumaila (University of British Columbia) and was moderated by the Global Ocean Policy Director of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Minna Epps.

53. At its 220th meeting, the Assembly considered and adopted a decision on the designation of 1 November as the International Day of the Deep Seabed ([ISBA/30/A/13](#)), as proposed by the delegations of Fiji, Jamaica, Malta and Singapore. The decision was presented as a gift for the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary to promote the legal regime for the common heritage of humankind and the work of the Authority.

54. Delegations renewed their commitment to the international legal order and the Authority's mandate and their unwavering support for the Authority to ensure that multilateralism will continue to lead the way forward. While the Convention promotes

stability of the law and maintenance of international peace and security, it anchors the Authority's mandate entrusted with the governance of the common heritage of humankind. Delegations commented that the Convention either embodied or reflected customary international law. They underscored that the Authority was at a critical juncture, facing unforeseen challenges due to recent initiatives to proceed with unilateral mining outside the legal framework of the Part XI legal regime. Such unilateral acts are not allowed under the Convention and international law. Article 137 of the Convention prohibits the appropriation of the Area or its resources by any State or natural or juridical person. Delegations commented that these rules were also part of customary international law and thus also binding upon third States.

55. Delegations paid tribute to the invaluable contributions made by the past three Secretary-Generals.

56. Delegations widely acknowledged the steadfast support from the host country of the Authority.

57. Delegations called for future decisions to continue to promote the orderly development of the common heritage of humankind and to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment. Decisions must continue to be guided by sufficient and sound scientific knowledge for the adoption in a timely manner of a robust regulatory regime that ensures the effective protection of the marine environment, balances commercial opportunity and allows for benefits from such opportunities to be shared equitably with humanity as a whole, with the meaningful participation of developing States, including the operationalization of the Enterprise, and capacity-building. Delegations pledged that the Authority continues to be guided by the same spirit of solidarity, sustainability and shared responsibility that gave rise to its founding, following the introduction by Mr. Pardo of the idea of the principle of the common heritage of humankind.

## **X. Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee**

58. At its 217th meeting, on 22 July, the Assembly considered and took note of the report of the Finance Committee ([ISBA/30/A/8-ISBA/30/C/12](#)). Delegations took note of the status of the various funds and commended member States and other stakeholders for donations made to them, while urging others to do the same.

59. Delegations commended the Finance Committee for its work, while also noting its increasing workload, and suggested allocating additional days for future formal meetings and organizing more informal webinars. Some delegations requested clarification on the recent restructuring of the secretariat and on reclassification, as well as potential implications, liabilities and costs in the future, including those that may result from ongoing litigation. With respect to the development of rules, regulations and procedures on the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area, some delegations reiterated that the ongoing development of the Common Heritage Fund should not be the only mechanism for the purpose of the equitable sharing of benefits, and encouraged the Committee to explore other options. In providing clarification and background information on the carefully drafted request for the development of that option, which provides the maximum flexibility and does not represent a decision, the Chair of the Committee recalled that a response to avert unilateralism lay in making progress and taking decisions on recommendations.

60. The Assembly adopted a decision relating to financial and budgetary matters ([ISBA/30/A/11](#)).

## **XI. Statement by the President of the Council on the work of the Council during the thirtieth session**

61. At its 217th meeting, the Assembly took note of the statement by the President of the Council on the work of the Council during the thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/C/5](#) and [ISBA/30/C/5/Add.1](#)).

## **XII. Need for a general policy of the Authority for the protection and preservation of the marine environment: scope and parameters**

62. On 21 July, a debate on the need for a general policy of the Authority for the protection of the marine environment took place in connection with the adoption of the agenda of the Assembly. The delegation of Chile, as proponent of the concept note and of a proposal to initiate an informal intersessional dialogue aimed at advancing discussions on a general policy for the preservation and protection of the marine environment, held informal consultations during the week.

63. At the 224th meeting, divergent views were expressed on the proposal. Several delegations supported the proposal to initiate a dialogue and create a space and process for it, as such a policy could guide and ensure consistency in decision-making across the Authority's organs and help to align its work with other relevant international instruments and processes. Several delegations recalled procedural aspects, the need for consistency with the Part XI regime and for not undermining the functions entrusted to the Council and the Legal and Technical Commission, and the need for complementing and not impeding but maintaining the momentum for the development of the regulations on exploitation.

64. The Assembly did not reach consensus on the proposal and decided not to defer the question to the next session.

## **XIII. Other matters**

65. At the 224th meeting, the delegation of Tonga, as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, delivered a statement on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum members participating in the Assembly, in which they referred to a landmark dialogue with a high-level *talanoa* on deep-sea minerals as a critical step in facilitating open and inclusive discussion on deep-sea minerals in the context of regional cooperation, recognizing both the diversity of positions and the value of discussing strong governance frameworks and support for a regional repository to consolidate and address any gaps in knowledge. They called for investment in research, technology and capacity-building programmes for the benefit of developing States.

## **XIV. Dates of the next session of the Assembly**

66. The thirty-first session of the Assembly will be held in Kingston from 27 to 31 July 2026. It will be the turn of the Group of Western European and other States to nominate a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly.

## **XV. Closing of the session**

67. After observing a minute of silence at the end of the 224th meeting, the President closed the session.

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## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part I

Kingston, 17–28 March 2025

Item 7 of the provisional agenda\*

**Status of contracts for exploration and related matters,  
including information on the periodic review of the  
implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

### **Status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Status of contracts for exploration and related matters**

1. Contracts currently pertain to each of the three mineral resources for which the International Seabed Authority has adopted regulations on prospecting and exploration. These are polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts.
2. As at 24 January 2025, 30 contracts for exploration were in force, of which 19 were for polymetallic nodules, 7 for polymetallic sulphides and 4 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. For each mineral resource, a complete list, containing the name of the contractor, the sponsoring State or States, if applicable, the general location of the exploration areas and the dates of entry into force, extension, if applicable, and expiry of each contract, is provided in annex I to the present report.
3. The application for approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides submitted by the Government of India was approved by the Council during the second part of the twenty-ninth session. The Government of India provided its feedback on the draft contract in January 2025, and the secretariat is finalizing the contract. Appropriate arrangements will be made for the signing of the contract between the Secretary-General and the Government of India.

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\* ISBA/30/C/L.1.



## II. Periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration

4. In accordance with the regulations on exploration and the standard clauses of contracts for exploration,<sup>1</sup> the contractor and the Secretary-General are to undertake jointly a periodic review of the implementation of a plan of work for exploration at intervals of five years. The Secretary-General may request the contractor to submit such additional data and information as may be necessary for the purposes of the review. In the light of the review, the contractor is required to make such adjustments to its plan of work as are necessary and to indicate its programme of activities for the following five-year period, including a revised schedule of expected yearly expenditure. The Secretary-General is to report on the review to the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council and to indicate in her report whether any observations transmitted to her by States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea concerning the manner in which the contractor has discharged its obligations under the regulations relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment were taken into account in the review.

5. To give effect to those provisions, the Secretary-General consults with the Commission (in-session or intersessionally depending on the date of submission of the reports) on the content of reports submitted by contractors under the periodic review. These reports serve as a baseline against which to evaluate the progress of exploration work, the submission of data by contractors and the overall consistency of planned activities with the approved plan of work for exploration. Comments and suggestions made by the Commission are then taken into account in discussions between the Secretary-General and the contractors, and adjustments are made to the proposed programme of activities as necessary. The programmes of activities are then incorporated into the contracts as a revised schedule.

6. The review of the periodic report submitted by Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security (JOGMEC) was completed in 2024. From February 2024 to January 2025, eight periodic review reports were submitted, namely those on the implementation of the plans of work of: (a) China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA); (b) Government of the Republic of Korea; (c) Global Sea Mineral Resources NV (GSR); (d) UK Seabed Resources Ltd. (UKSR);<sup>2</sup> (e) Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer); (f) Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation (BPC); (g) Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.; and (h) Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd. (OMS). The reviews are expected to be completed by the end of April 2025.

7. Annex II to the present report provides a breakdown of the status of periodic reviews, including those due in 2025.

8. The new five-year periodic report template was finalized by the Commission during the second part of the twenty-ninth session and has been issued as document [ISBA/29/LTC/7](#). In August 2024, the secretariat sent a copy of the new template to all contractors, who were advised to use it to prepare and submit their five-year periodic reports.

<sup>1</sup> See regulation 28 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area ([ISBA/19/C/17](#), annex, and [ISBA/20/A/9](#)), regulation 30 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area ([ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex), regulation 30 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area ([ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex) and standard clause 4.4 of the contracts for exploration.

<sup>2</sup> Second five-year periodic report resubmitted on 11 July 2024.

### III. Extensions of contracts for exploration

9. A total of eight contracts for polymetallic nodules (with Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya, Government of the Republic of Korea, COMRA, Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd, Ifremer, Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, and Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.) and one for polymetallic sulphides (with COMRA) are due to expire in 2026. The six contractors whose contracts will expire in the first six months of 2026 are expected to submit their applications for extension of the contracts in the second half of 2025 in accordance with section 3, paragraph 3.2, of the standard clauses for contracts for exploration. The expiry dates of those contracts are provided in annex I to the present report.

### IV. Status of relinquishment

10. Contractors are required to relinquish parts of the areas allocated for exploration in accordance with the provisions of regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area ([ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex) and regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area ([ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex) in respect of the relinquishment from the original contract area for those resources. The mechanisms for relinquishing the area are guided by recommendations issued by the Commission ([ISBA/25/LTC/8](#)), which are used by the contractors to prepare their relinquishment reports and maps and by the secretariat to evaluate the contractors' reports. The outcomes of the evaluation are then issued by the secretariat as a conference room paper for the Commission and as a working document for the Council, in which both bodies are requested to take note of the secretariat's conclusions.

11. On 18 June 2024, Ifremer submitted a request to the Secretary-General for the second deferral of its second relinquishment of areas under its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides by another year.<sup>3</sup> A separate note by the secretariat on this matter has been prepared for consideration by the Commission.

12. Similarly, on 28 November 2024, the Government of India submitted a request to the Secretary-General for deferral of its second relinquishment of areas under its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides by two years. A separate note by the secretariat on this matter has been prepared for consideration by the Commission.

13. Annex III to the present report contains the schedule and status of relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration.

### V. Recommendation

14. The Council is invited to take note of the status of contracts for exploration, including the progress made in preparation for the signing of the contract for polymetallic sulphides between the Authority and the Government of India, the information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work, the status of relinquishment, the update of extension agreements and the use of the new five-year periodic report template by contractors.

<sup>3</sup> Ifremer's request for the first deferral of its second relinquishment was approved by the Council during the second part of the twenty-seventh session (see [ISBA/27/C/39](#)).

## Annex I

## Status of approved contracts for exploration

## A. Contracts for exploration for polymetallic nodules

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
1	Interoceanmetal Joint Organization	29 March 2001 29 March 2016 <sup>a</sup> 29 March 2021 <sup>b</sup>	Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechia, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	28 March 2016 28 March 2021 28 March 2026
2	JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya	29 March 2001 29 March 2016 <sup>a</sup> 29 March 2021 <sup>b</sup>	Russian Federation	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	28 March 2016 28 March 2021 28 March 2026
3	Government of the Republic of Korea	27 April 2001 27 April 2016 <sup>a</sup> 27 April 2021 <sup>b</sup>	n/a	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	26 April 2016 26 April 2021 26 April 2026
4	China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	22 May 2001 22 May 2016 <sup>a</sup> 22 May 2021 <sup>b</sup>	China	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	21 May 2016 21 May 2021 21 May 2026
5	Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd.	20 June 2001 20 June 2016 <sup>a</sup> 20 June 2021 <sup>b</sup>	Japan	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	19 June 2016 19 June 2021 19 June 2026
6	Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	20 June 2001 20 June 2016 <sup>a</sup> 20 June 2021 <sup>b</sup>	France	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	19 June 2016 19 June 2021 19 June 2026
7	Government of India	25 March 2002 25 March 2017 <sup>c</sup> 25 March 2022 <sup>d</sup>	n/a	Central Indian Ocean basin	24 March 2017 24 March 2022 24 March 2027
8	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	19 July 2006 19 July 2021 <sup>e</sup>	Germany	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	18 July 2021 18 July 2026
9	Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.	22 July 2011	Nauru	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	21 July 2026
10	Tonga Offshore Mining Limited	11 January 2012	Tonga	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	10 January 2027
11	Global Sea Mineral Resources NV	14 January 2013	Belgium	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	13 January 2028
12	UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	8 February 2013	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	7 February 2028

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
13	Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.	19 January 2015	Kiribati	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	18 January 2030
14	Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd.	22 January 2015	Singapore	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	21 January 2030
15	UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	29 March 2016	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Clarion-Clipperton Zone	28 March 2031
16	Cook Islands Investment Corporation	15 July 2016	Cook Islands	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	14 July 2031
17	China Minmetals Corporation	12 May 2017	China	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	11 May 2032
18	Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation	18 October 2019	China	Western Pacific Ocean	17 October 2034
19	Blue Minerals Jamaica Ltd.	4 April 2021	Jamaica	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (reserved area)	3 April 2036

*Abbreviation:* n/a, not applicable.

<sup>a</sup> First five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-second session (2016).

<sup>b</sup> Second five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-sixth session (2021).

<sup>c</sup> First five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-third session (2017).

<sup>d</sup> Second five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-seventh session (2022).

<sup>e</sup> First five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-sixth session (2021).

## **B. Contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides**

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
1	China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	18 November 2011	China	South-west Indian Ridge	17 November 2026
2	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	29 October 2012	n/a	Mid-Atlantic Ridge	28 October 2027
3	Government of the Republic of Korea	24 June 2014	n/a	Central Indian Ocean	23 June 2029
4	Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	18 November 2014	France	Mid-Atlantic Ridge	17 November 2029
5	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	6 May 2015	Germany	Central Indian Ridge and South-east Indian Ridge	5 May 2030

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
6	Government of India	26 September 2016	n/a	Indian Ocean Ridge	25 September 2031
7	Government of Poland	12 February 2018	n/a	Mid-Atlantic Ridge	11 February 2033

*Abbreviation:* n/a, not applicable.

### **C. Contracts for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts**

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
1	Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security	27 January 2014	Japan	Western Pacific Ocean	26 January 2029
2	China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	29 April 2014	China	Western Pacific Ocean	28 April 2029
3	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	10 March 2015	n/a	Magellan mountains in the Pacific Ocean	9 March 2030
4	Government of the Republic of Korea	27 March 2018	n/a	East of the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean	26 March 2033

*Abbreviation:* n/a, not applicable.

## Annex II

### Status of periodic reviews

#### A. Periodic reviews either completed or in progress

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Expiration of five-year period<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Status</i>
1	China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	Cobalt-rich crusts	29 January 2024	In progress
2	Government of the Republic of Korea	Polymetallic sulphides	25 March 2024	In progress
3	Global Sea Mineral Resources NV	Polymetallic nodules	31 March 2024	In progress
4	UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	7 November 2022	In progress
5	Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation	Polymetallic nodules	19 July 2024	In progress
6	Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	Polymetallic sulphides	19 August 2024	In progress
7	Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	20 October 2024	In progress
8	Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	23 October 2024	In progress
9	Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security	Cobalt-rich crusts	26 October 2023	Completed

#### B. Periodic reviews due in 2025

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Expiration of five-year period<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Status</i>
1	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Cobalt-rich crusts	9 March 2025	Report due by 9 December 2024
2	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	Polymetallic sulphides	6 May 2025	Report due by 4 February 2025
3	UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	29 March 2026	Report due by 28 December 2025
4	Interoceanmetal Joint Organization	Polymetallic nodules	29 March 2026	Report due by 28 December 2025
5	JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya	Polymetallic nodules	29 March 2026	Report due by 28 December 2025

<sup>a</sup> Not later than 90 days prior to the expiration of each five-year period from the date on which the contract enters into force, the contractor and the Secretary-General shall jointly undertake a review of the implementation of the plan of work for exploration under the contract (sect. 4.4 of the standard clauses for exploration contract ([ISBA/19/C/17](#), annex IV; [ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex 4, and [ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex IV)).

## Annex III

### Schedule and status of relinquishments of areas under contracts for exploration

#### A. Contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>First relinquishment (50 per cent of original contract area, year 8)</i>	<i>Second relinquishment (75 per cent of original contract area, year 10)</i>
1 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Completed	Completed
2 Government of the Republic of Korea	Completed	Deferred to 31 December 2026 <sup>a</sup>
3 Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	Completed	Deferred to 18 November 2025 <sup>b</sup>
4 Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	Completed	Deferred to 6 May 2026 <sup>c</sup>
5 Government of India	30 September 2026 <sup>d</sup>	25 September 2026
6 Government of Poland	11 February 2026	11 February 2028

#### B. Contracts for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>First relinquishment (50 per cent of original contract area, year 8)</i>	<i>Second relinquishment (75 per cent of original contract area, year 10)</i>
1 Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security	Completed	Completed
2 China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	Completed	Completed
3 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Completed	9 March 2025
4 Government of the Republic of Korea	26 March 2026	26 March 2028

<sup>a</sup> Council decision [ISBA/28/C/8](#).

<sup>b</sup> Council decision [ISBA/27/C/39](#).

<sup>c</sup> Council decision [ISBA/27/C/19](#).

<sup>d</sup> Council decision [ISBA/28/C/22](#).





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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 7

**Status of contracts for exploration and related matters,  
including information on the periodic review of the  
implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

### **Status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **Addendum**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The present addendum should be read in conjunction with the report prepared for consideration by the Council during the first part of the thirtieth session,<sup>1</sup> which covered the period to 24 January 2025. The addendum provides an update as at 31 May 2025.

### **II. Status of contracts for exploration and related matters**

#### *Status update of UK Seabed Resources Ltd.*

2. On 20 May 2025, UK Seabed Resources Ltd. (UKSR) sent a letter to the Secretary-General concerning the status update of UKSR. The letter provides more information about the bankruptcy of Loke Marine Minerals (“Loke”), the parent company of UKSR, and how the bankruptcy has affected the activities of UKSR, covering: (a) an overview of the circumstances around the Loke bankruptcy; (b) the status of the Loke bankruptcy and UKSR; and (c) the anticipated way forward for UKSR. It is noted in the letter, however, that bankruptcy has not been filed for UKSR.

3. According to the letter, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland must approve the new ownership. UKSR has initiated dialogue

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<sup>1</sup> [ISBA/30/C/2](#).



with the Government of the United Kingdom about its continued sponsorship of the two exploration contracts (UKSR1 and UKSR2) signed with the International Seabed Authority and to find a sustainable solution for UKSR.

4. It is further stated in the letter that, in late 2023, Loke approached the market to raise new capital for the UKSR business case, but unfortunately it was unsuccessful in attracting new equity from new investors. In January 2025, despite efforts to find a solution, Loke was not able to repay its loan, and the Loke management was instructed by its board to file for bankruptcy. The bankruptcy was filed on 3 April 2025.

5. As a result of the bankruptcy proceedings, control of Loke and consequently over UKSR, which is owned entirely by Loke, was transferred to the appointed liquidator.

6. Following the bankruptcy proceedings, the Loke management, together with new investors, established a new company, Glomar Minerals Ltd. (“Glomar”). Glomar entered the auction process for UKSR and submitted the highest bid for UKSR by the close of the auction on 14 April 2025. The status is as follows: (a) the agreement with the liquidator has been signed and the liquidator fee has been paid; (b) the settlement agreement with Loke creditors has been signed; (c) the licence fee<sup>2</sup> to the Authority for 2025 for both UKSR1 and UKSR2 was paid on 2 May 2025 through a loan from Glomar investors to UKSR; and (d) this has triggered the process for the Government of the United Kingdom to review the sale and sponsorship of UKSR.

7. During this period, the former Loke management has supported the Norwegian liquidator in maintaining UKSR and has kept both the Government of the United Kingdom and the secretariat of the Authority informed about the development.

8. As highlighted by the contractor, the bankruptcy process has put all activity in UKSR on hold until the clearance by the Government of the United Kingdom of the sale to Glomar is obtained. UKSR is therefore presently unable to provide any information on the future planned activities under its exploration contracts with the Authority.

9. If the process is concluded successfully by the Government of the United Kingdom, the new owner of UKSR will be a company registered in the United Kingdom. UKSR will update the Secretary-General on Glomar’s plans for the UKSR1 and UKSR2 contracts once the UKSR acquisition process is completed.

### **III. Periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

#### **Update on periodic reviews since 3 March 2025<sup>3</sup>**

##### **1. Update on the status of periodic reviews as reported on 3 March 2025**

- (a) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic cobalt-rich crusts by the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association*

10. The contractor submitted its periodic report on 26 April 2024, the due date having been 28 January 2024. The contractor has provided the additional information requested by the secretariat. The periodic review is completed.

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<sup>2</sup> The annual overhead charge paid by the contractors.

<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/30/C/2](#).

- (b) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides by Government of the Republic of Korea*
11. The periodic report is under review, with an expected completion date of 31 July 2025.
- (c) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by Global Sea Mineral Resources NV*
12. On 31 March 2024, the contractor submitted its periodic report. The preliminary review has been completed and is awaiting additional information from the contractor. The expected completion date is 15 July 2025.
- (d) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by UK Seabed Resources Ltd.*
13. The secretariat is reviewing additional information provided by the contractor. The anticipated completion date is 30 June 2025.
- (e) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer*
14. The secretariat is awaiting additional information from the contractor to proceed and close out the review. The anticipated completion date is 15 July 2025.
- (f) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation*
15. The contractor submitted the Chinese language version of its five-year periodic report on 18 October 2024, the due date having been 17 July 2024. The English translation was submitted on 22 November 2024. The review is ongoing and is expected to be completed by 15 August 2025.
- (g) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.*
16. The secretariat held a periodic review meeting with the contractor on 16 May 2025 to finalize the review. The review remains ongoing pending the submission of a new and detailed programme of activities for the third five-year period once the contractor secures a new technical partner by the end of 2025.
- (h) *Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd.*
17. The secretariat held a periodic review meeting with the contractor on 28 May 2025 to finalize the review; the review is expected to be closed out by 31 July 2025.

## **2. Status of periodic reviews started after 3 March 2025**

18. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation submitted the Russian language version of its second five-year periodic report for its cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts contract on 24 March 2025, pursuant to the periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration. The report had been due on 9 December 2024. The English language version of the report was submitted on 19 May 2025.

19. The Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources submitted its second five-year periodic report for its polymetallic sulphides contract on 28 March

2025, and the report is currently under review by the secretariat. The report had been due on 4 February 2025.

20. Annex I to the present report provides a breakdown of the status of periodic reviews, including those due in 2025.

#### **IV. Installation of submarine cables in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone**

21. On 20 June 2024, China Minmetals Corporation notified the secretariat that it had been informed by SubCom, LLC, a submarine laying cable company registered in the United States of America, that it would be laying a submarine cable across the China Minmetals Corporation contract area. Another cable would traverse the contract areas of Tonga Offshore Mining Ltd., the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya and the Republic of Korea, as well as areas of particular environmental interest Nos. 3 and 5. Between July and December 2024, the secretariat exchanged communications with SubCom and later with the International Cable Protection Committee with respect to due regard to the rights of the Authority and the contractors and the need for consultation, and to encourage SubCom to engage in consultations with the five affected contractors.

22. In response to a request from the secretariat, SubCom provided relevant information and a map showing the location of the cable in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone; the cable would traverse four contract areas, three areas of particular environmental interest and three reserved areas. In December 2024, the secretariat formally notified the five contractors and the interim Director General of the Enterprise of SubCom's intention to lay the submarine cables and encouraged them to liaise directly with SubCom.

23. In March 2025, SubCom sent the secretariat a pre- and post-installation notification. The secretariat in turn forwarded the notification to the five contractors and the interim Director General of the Enterprise.

#### **V. Status of relinquishments**

24. In a letter dated 30 April 2025 addressed to the Secretary-General, the Government of Poland requested a two-year deferment of the first relinquishment schedule to 11 February 2028 and to 11 February 2030 for the second relinquishment. The request will be considered by the Legal and Technical Commission with a view to making a recommendation to the Council during the second part of the thirtieth session.

25. In a letter dated 10 March 2025, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation submitted to the Secretary-General information on the relinquishment of two thirds of the original area allocated to it under the exploration contract for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. The Commission and the Council will be invited to take note of the relinquishment during the second part of the thirtieth session.

26. Annex II to the present report contains the schedule and status of relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration.

#### **VI. Recommendation**

27. The Council is invited to take note of the present report.

## Annex I

### Status of periodic reviews

#### A. Periodic reviews either completed or in progress

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Expiration of five-year period<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Status</i>
1	China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	Cobalt-rich crusts	28 April 2024	Completed
2	Government of the Republic of Korea	Polymetallic sulphides	23 June 2024	In progress
3	Global Sea Mineral Resources NV	Polymetallic nodules	13 January 2023	In progress Report due by 31 March 2024 <sup>b</sup>
4	UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	7 February 2023	In progress
5	Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation	Polymetallic nodules	17 October 2024	In progress
6	Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	Polymetallic sulphides	17 November 2024	In progress
7	Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	18 January 2025	In progress
8	Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	21 January 2025	In progress
9	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Cobalt-rich crusts	9 March 2025	In progress
10	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	Polymetallic sulphides	5 May 2025	In progress

#### B. Periodic reviews due in 2025

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Expiration of five-year period<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Status</i>
	UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	Polymetallic nodules	29 March 2026	Report due by 28 December 2025

<sup>a</sup> Not later than 90 days prior to the expiration of each five-year period from the date on which the contract enters into force, the contractor and the Secretary-General shall jointly undertake a review of the implementation of the plan of work for exploration under the contract (sect. 4.4 of the standard clauses for exploration contract (ISBA/19/C/17, annex IV; ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex 4; and ISBA/18/A/11, annex IV)).

<sup>b</sup> See ISBA/25/C/9, para. 11.

## Annex II

### Schedule and status of relinquishments of areas under contracts for exploration

#### A. Contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>First relinquishment (50 per cent of original contract area, year 8)</i>	<i>Second relinquishment (75 per cent of original contract area, year 10)</i>
1 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Completed	18 March 2025 <sup>a</sup>
2 Government of the Republic of Korea	Completed	Deferred to 31 December 2026 <sup>b</sup>
3 Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	Completed	Deferred to 18 November 2025 <sup>c</sup> (request for deferment pending) <sup>d</sup>
4 Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	Completed	Deferred to 6 May 2026 <sup>e</sup>
5 Government of India	30 September 2026 <sup>f</sup>	30 September 2028 <sup>g</sup>
6 Government of Poland	11 February 2026 <sup>h</sup>	11 February 2028

#### B. Contracts for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>First relinquishment (50 per cent of original contract area, year 8)</i>	<i>Second relinquishment (75 per cent of original contract area, year 10)</i>
1 Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security	Completed	Completed
2 China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	Completed	Completed
3 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Completed	9 March 2025
4 Government of the Republic of Korea	26 March 2026	26 March 2028

<sup>a</sup> Contractor submitted a report and geographical coordinates of the relinquished areas to be considered by the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council during the second part of the thirtieth session.

<sup>b</sup> Council decision [ISBA/28/C/8](#).

<sup>c</sup> Council decision [ISBA/27/C/39](#).

<sup>d</sup> Request for deferment under consideration by the Legal and Technical Commission (see [ISBA/30/LTC/2](#); and [ISBA/30/C/4](#), para. 15).

<sup>e</sup> Council decision [ISBA/27/C/19](#).

<sup>f</sup> Council decision [ISBA/28/C/22](#).

<sup>g</sup> Council decision [ISBA/30/C/6](#).

<sup>h</sup> Request for deferment to be considered by the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council during the second part of the thirtieth session.



## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 7

**Status of contracts for exploration and related matters,  
including information on the periodic review of the  
implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

## **Status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **Addendum**

1. The present addendum is issued in line with the requirement of step 3 of the three-step process developed by the Legal and Technical Commission for the identification of contractors that have responded insufficiently or incompletely, or failed to respond, to the calls from the Council to address issues identified by the Commission in relation to their contractual obligations.<sup>1</sup> It should be read in conjunction with documents [ISBA/30/C/2](#) and [ISBA/30/C/2/Add.1](#), which cover the periods up to 24 January and 31 May 2025, respectively.
2. During the second part of its thirtieth session, in line with the agreed procedure, the Legal and Technical Commission determined that the following contractors required continued attention regarding their performance and alignment with their contractual obligations: (a) UK Seabed Resources Ltd. I and II; (b) Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.; and (c) Cook Islands Investment Corporation. Further information is provided in the report of the Chair of the Commission.<sup>2</sup>
3. The Council is invited to take note of the present report.

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<sup>1</sup> [ISBA/29/LTC/5](#), appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> [ISBA/30/C/4/Add.1](#).





## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part I

Kingston, 3–14 March 2025

Item 14 of the provisional agenda\*

### **Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session**

## **Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The first part of the thirtieth session of the Legal and Technical Commission of the International Seabed Authority was held from 3 to 14 March 2025. A total of 26 members participated in the meetings, with Malcolm Clark (New Zealand) contributing to agenda items remotely by email. The Commission noted with concern that this represented the lowest attendance at the meetings since the beginning of its tenure. The Commission would welcome increased support from member States in ensuring that nominated members are provided with adequate time and resources to fully participate and engage in the work of the Commission.

2. On 3 March, the Commission re-elected Erasmo Lara Cabrera (Mexico) as Chair and Sissel Eriksen (Norway) as Vice-Chair for a third term. The Commission reviewed and took note of intersessional activities relating to its work carried out between July 2024 and February 2025.

### **II. Prospecting**

3. On 3, 4 and 7 March, following on from its consideration of prospecting at its twenty-ninth session, the Commission noted that Argeo Survey had submitted a 2024 prospecting report.<sup>1</sup> It considered the key findings and noted that the survey undertaken by Argeo in April 2023 had been conducted with an autonomous underwater vehicle, which had collected a wide range of data including bathymetric and environmental data over 55 km<sup>2</sup>. It further noted that during the survey, no mineral discoveries had been made; however, the survey had provided valuable data that would contribute to geological knowledge. The data collected had been submitted to the Authority.

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\* [ISBA/30/C/L.1](#).

<sup>1</sup> See [ISBA/29/C/7/Add.1](#).





4. The Commission noted that the prospector had complied with the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area. No additional surveys had been conducted in 2024.

### **III. Activities of the contractors**

#### **A. Report on the status of the contracts for exploration and periodic reviews of the implementation of plans of work for exploration**

5. On 3 March, the Commission took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of contracts for exploration, the review of contractors' five-year periodic reports, updates with respect to extension agreements, and the status of relinquishments ([ISBA/30/C/2](#)). It welcomed the report and noted that the review of one periodic report had been completed, eight were in progress and one was delayed. Five reports are expected to be submitted to the Secretary-General in 2025.

6. The Commission asked the secretariat to keep it updated, particularly on the progress and timeliness of the periodic review processes for contractors.<sup>2</sup>

#### **B. Implementation of training programmes under plans of work for exploration and allocation of training opportunities**

7. On 3 March, the Commission was briefed on the status of implementation of training programmes since its previous meeting in July 2024. During the intersessional period, based on the recommendations of the training subgroup, the Commission had selected 33 first-ranked and 19 reserve candidates. A breakdown of the selection of candidates by training programme under plans of work for exploration from July 2024 to March 2025 is contained in [ISBA/30/LTC/6](#).

8. The Commission noted that the Capacity Development Alumni Network (iCAN) plays a key role in monitoring the impact of the contractors' training programme and its other capacity development initiatives. The Commission commended the secretariat for holding a second call for applications in 2024, which led to the incorporation of 38 new members from 22 countries, bring the total to 118 alumni, of which 86 had been beneficiaries of the contractors' training programme. The Commission recommended leveraging the diverse geographical and disciplinary representation of iCAN members to enhance outreach and dissemination efforts related to the contractors' training programme.

#### **C. Consideration of annual reports of contractors**

9. The Commission continued the work initiated during the twenty-ninth session on assessing the performance of contractors in accordance with the criteria outlined in [ISBA/29/LTC/5](#), including the checklists and associated processes.

10. On 3, 5, 6, 10 and 11 March, the Commission reviewed responses from the eight contractors identified at its previous session as requiring specific attention. It noted that while some contractors had provided satisfactory responses, for others, further clarification and review was required.

11. To that end, the relevant contractors will be invited, through the secretariat and following the modalities set out in [ISBA/29/LTC/6](#), to a virtual exchange of views

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<sup>2</sup> [ISBA/30/C/2](#), para. 6.

with the Commission in May 2025. The objective is to facilitate a detailed exchange of views on ongoing concerns, in line with the modalities, and enhance mutual understanding and expectations regarding the implementation of plans of work for exploration.

12. The Commission will report to the Council on the outcome of the exchange of views at the second part of its session in July 2025.

#### **D. Relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts**

13. On 3, 11 and 12 March, the Commission considered requests to defer relinquishment from the Government of India ([ISBA/30/LTC/3](#)) and the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer ([ISBA/30/LTC/2](#)).

14. The Commission considered the request by the Government of India to defer its second relinquishment by two years. The Government noted that exceptional circumstances relating to the residual effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had adversely affected its exploration activities. The Commission accepted that there were reasonable grounds for the request and recommended that the Council approve the request for deferment submitted by the Government of India (see annex).

15. The Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer requested to further defer its second relinquishment by one year, indicating the residual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other operational challenges. The Commission considered it appropriate to request further details from the contractor regarding its request. The Commission will liaise with the contractor through the secretariat and revisit the matter at the second part of its thirtieth session.

#### **E. Review of the environmental impact statements submitted by contractors**

16. The Commission dedicated 8 out of 10 days to the consideration of two environmental impact statements submitted by China Minmetals Corporation (CMC) and Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation (BPC). The Commission reviewed the environmental impact statements for completeness, accuracy and statistical reliability, in accordance with the recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area ([ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.3](#)).

17. On 7 March, a list of questions requesting additional information was sent to CMC, which responded on 12 March. After reviewing the responses, the Commission formulated an additional set of questions seeking further clarification. On 14 March, an initial set of questions requesting additional information was sent to BPC. The Commission noted that, in order to provide enough time for the consideration of the environmental impact statements from BPC, it would continue its analysis in the intersessional period, with a view to finalizing it at the second part of the current session.

18. On 13 and 14 March, the Commission considered the outcome of its review of the environmental impact statement submitted by CMC. It noted that the contractor plans to carry out testing of its prototype nodule collector vehicle from July to October 2025 in Block A-5 of the Contract Area in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, in order to test the prototype collector vehicle and monitor and assess its environmental impact. The planned test comprises two separate sets of underwater operations. The total area of disturbance for the two tests is expected to be 0.1 km<sup>2</sup> in a collector test

area of 0.6 km<sup>2</sup>. The total wet weight of nodules that will be collected is estimated at 1,300 tonnes, and that lifted alongside the collector vehicle to the surface platform is expected to be no more than 10 tonnes. The maximum impact range of the plume is expected to be 2.1 km horizontally and 124 m vertically. The range of sediment plume redeposition with thickness greater than 0.1 mm is expected to be no more than 1 km<sup>2</sup>. The plume is expected to last for up to 3.5 days after the test.

19. The Commission considered that the proposed environmental impact statement is well organized and well written and incorporates the elements required pursuant to annex III to the recommendations. It was noted that the contractor had incorporated suggestions arising from consultation and comments from the secretariat. In addition, the contractor had responded to the Commission's comments and questions, and incorporated its suggestions. The Commission considered, among other things, collector operations, the limited nature of the biological baseline data, the assessment provided of test impacts, and the appropriateness of the monitoring plans. To improve measurement of impacts relative to natural variability and to ensure that test survey design was robust, discussion with CMC involved exchanges to evaluate sampling locations, numbers and density of sampling stations and gear types in their monitoring surveys, especially in their designated impact reference zone and collector test area. In synthesis, the Commission concluded that the contractor has evaluated the main sources of risk from the impacts of the test and was satisfied with the assessment that the impacts are sufficiently localized to not cause a risk of serious harm.

20. In conclusion, and after the Commission reviewed the environmental impact statements for completeness, accuracy and statistical reliability, in accordance with the recommendations, it recommends the Secretary-General incorporates the environmental impact statements into the programme of activities under the exploration contract of CMC.

## **IV. Regulatory activities of the Authority**

### **A. Development of environmental threshold values**

21. On 7 and 13 March, the Commission took note of the progress made with respect to the development of environmental threshold values for toxicity, turbidity and settling of resuspended sediments, and underwater noise and light pollution by the subgroups of the intersessional expert group. It also took note that an alternate co-chair had been designated for the toxicity subgroup, Ellen Pape (Belgium). The Commission noted that, following the in-person meeting of the intersessional expert group held in Kingston in June 2024, the subgroups worked collaboratively during the intersessional period to prepare three chapters of the intersessional expert group report describing the work undertaken to date on evaluating thresholds for these three areas.

22. The Commission took note of the highlights of the intersessional expert group discussions, related to existing methodologies, approaches and data requirements from other industries and regulatory frameworks for the development of threshold values. The need to adopt an evolutionary approach in the development and review of threshold values, including adaptive management measures, was also noted. The intersessional expert group report is expected to identify scientific research needs and approaches for future review and development of thresholds.

23. The Commission noted the need to further consider appropriate spatial and temporal scales of plume effects and sound and light attenuation, as well as cumulative effects among these environmental pressures, and how the development

of threshold values relates to other parts of the regulatory framework, including other standards and guidelines and the draft exploitation regulations.

24. The finalization of the draft report of the intersessional expert group will continue to be a priority for the Commission, with a view to releasing a draft for stakeholder consultations at the thirtieth session, following which all comments received will be reviewed by the Commission and reported to the Council.

## **V. Environmental management planning**

### **A. Development of a standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans**

25. At its twenty-ninth session, the Council requested the Commission to submit a revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans to the Council before the first part of the thirtieth session, after consideration of the written comments received from the member States and observers of the Authority.<sup>3</sup>

26. The Commission noted that a total of nine submissions were received from member States and two observers, including one joint submission from three member States.<sup>4</sup> The Commission worked during the intersessional period and dedicated 6 of its 10 days of meetings to considering and implementing the comments received from the stakeholder process. The Commission divided the comments into two categories: comments of a scientific and technical nature, and comments of a legal nature.

27. The Commission noted that, to the furthest extent possible, most substantive scientific and technical comments have been incorporated into the draft revised standardized procedure (ISBA/30/C/3), including overarching environmental goals and objectives for regional environmental management plans, criteria for the selection of experts to participate in scientific and management-focused workshops, and details related to the review process for regional environmental management plans. The Commission decided to recommend to the Council the consideration and adoption of the revised standardized procedure and the template.

28. On 13 March, the Commission considered other overarching issues that were raised in some of the written comments that fall within the remit and agenda of the Council, namely the nature of the regional environmental management plans and the standardized procedure, the role of an independent expert committee, and responsibilities in relation to regional monitoring:

(a) In relation to the nature of regional environmental management plans, the Commission noted that three member States and an observer had suggested that the standardized procedure and the plans should be legally binding. The Commission recalled that the Clarion-Clipperton Zone environmental management plan had been adopted pursuant to a decision of the Council, with legal effects deriving from the terms of that decision, such as on decision-making of the Authority, particularly in

<sup>3</sup> ISBA/29/C/24, para. 12. The Council requested the Commission to develop a standardized approach for the development, approval and review of regional environmental management plans in the Area in its decisions ISBA/26/C/10, ISBA/27/C/44 and ISBA/29/C/24.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.isa.org.jm/protection-of-the-marine-environment/regional-environmental-management-plans/standardized-approach/>.

approving plans of work. The Commission noted that the nature of regional environmental management plans remains an ongoing discussion in the Council.<sup>5</sup>

(b) In relation to the role of an independent expert committee, the Commission noted that five delegations (three member States and two observers) had emphasized the need for the creation of such a committee. The Commission noted that in the exercise of its competence, and in accordance with article 163 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, it had the possibility to resort to external expertise. In that regard, the Commission recalled its practice of engaging effectively and inclusively with external experts and other stakeholders on regional environmental management plans, standards and guidelines, environmental thresholds and other similar scientific and technical processes, through workshops and public consultations.<sup>6</sup> The Commission also recalled that the existing practice of the Commission leading such expert processes had proven to be effective, inclusive and in conformity with the cost-effectiveness principle stipulated in the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention.<sup>7</sup>

(c) With regard to responsibilities for regional monitoring among different organs of the Authority, the Commission recognized that regional environmental management plans aim to promote collaboration and cooperation as broadly as possible for managing and monitoring vast regional areas. The Commission requests that the Council consider how resources are to be allocated to support regional monitoring, noting that it would be a difficult issue to address without clarity on the legal nature of regional environmental management plans. The Commission recognized the importance of collaboration with scientific organizations and initiatives in carrying out monitoring at a regional scale and decided to further consider regional monitoring from a scientific and technical perspective in the recommendations.

29. The Commission noted that the standardized procedure would need to be aligned with the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area once these have been adopted. It noted that further definitions and descriptions by the Council would not constitute an obstacle for the adoption of the standardized procedure as recommended by the Commission. The Commission also noted that written comments had been received on the recommendations; the Commission agreed to revisit and revise the recommendations (ISBA/29/LTC/8) after the adoption of the standardized procedure by the Council.

## **B. Development of regional environmental management plans in priority areas**

30. On 4 March, the Commission took note of recent activities related to the development of regional environmental management plans in the Indian and Northwest Pacific regions. The Authority will convene a scientific workshop in Qingdao, China, from 27 April to 1 May 2025 on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the mid-ocean ridges and Central Indian Ocean Basin. The workshop will be held in collaboration with the China Deep Ocean Affairs Administration, the First Institute of Oceanography of the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, and the secretariat of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

<sup>5</sup> See [ISBA/29/LTC/8](#).

<sup>6</sup> See [ISBA/29/C/7/Add.1](#), annex.

<sup>7</sup> See annex, sect. 1, para. 2.

## **VI. Data management**

### **Review of the workplan of the strategic road map for data management of the Authority for the period 2023–2028**

31. The Commission welcomed the progress made under the 2024 workplan of the strategic road map for data management of the Authority for the period 2024–2028 and endorsed the directions and priorities of the 2025 workplan. The workplan emphasizes the critical role of data in fulfilling the mandates of the Authority for effective management of seabed mineral resources and protection of the marine environment in the Area for the benefit of humankind.

32. The Commission noted that additional resources would be needed to deliver the workplan and increase the quality, availability and accessibility of data on the Area. It underlined that such efforts are necessary for effective governance of the Area and to advance deep-sea research, including through the entry of contractors' historical data into the DeepData database, which is important to support evaluation of both temporal and spatial variability in environmental parameters. In addition, the Commission recommended enhancing the interoperability and interconnection with other relevant global databases through integration of metadata on some of those other relevant data sources and sets. The Commission considered it important to draw this to the attention of the Council so that it may consider exploring options for securing the necessary resources and mobilizing support to ensure these objectives are successfully achieved.

## **VII. Matters referred to the Commission by the Council**

### **Identification of criteria which the Commission could use to decide whether to hold open meetings in accordance with its rules of procedure**

33. The Commission noted that during the twenty-ninth session, the Council, in its decision on the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission, reiterated the importance of transparency and urged the Commission to hold open meetings where appropriate and in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure, while ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive data and information ([ISBA/29/C/24](#)). To that end, on 7 and 11 March, the Commission discussed extensively the best approaches and criteria for implementing the Council's request within the scope of its current work schedule and priorities.

34. The Commission agreed on the importance of the matter and will continue to hold open meetings where appropriate and in accordance with its rules of procedure. Such meetings provide ample opportunity for the Commission to engage with members of the Authority, experts and other stakeholders. Open meetings would be held when issues of general interest to members of the Authority, which do not involve the discussion of confidential information, are being discussed, in line with rule 6 of the Commission's rules of procedure. In addition, in accordance with rule 53, the Commission will invite a member of the Authority to send a representative to attend meetings when a matter particularly affecting that member is being discussed. It may also invite any State or entity conducting activities in the Area for the purposes of consultation and collaboration, as deemed appropriate.

35. The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to its current practice of presenting the Chair's report to the Council and engaging in dialogue during sessions. It also intends to continue with its practice of holding side events during the second part of

the Council's sessions, as these have proven valuable over the past two years in strengthening dialogue with member States and stakeholders. The Commission discussed ways to further utilize and possibly expand this approach to enhance engagement, openness and transparency in its work.

36. The Commission recognized that several of its recent initiatives have contributed to increased transparency and engagement. These include the establishment of expert groups, such as technical working groups involved in drafting standards and guidelines and the organization of technical workshops on specific matters, such as the development of regional environmental management plans. Such initiatives continue to serve as valuable platforms for engaging experts and stakeholders. Lastly, the Commission will continue to explore cost-effective options such as the holding of informal webinars to engage with stakeholders on non-confidential aspects of its work.

## Annex

### **Draft decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Government of India**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* that, on 26 September 2016, the Government of India entered into a contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean with the Authority,

*Recalling also* regulation 27, paragraph 2, of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area,<sup>1</sup> which refers to the schedule of relinquishments of the area allocated to contractors,

*Noting* that, according to the schedule, the Government of India was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original contract area allocated to it by 26 September 2024, being the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, and at least 75 per cent of the original contract area allocated to it by 26 September 2026, being the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract,

*Noting also* that the Government of India, by letter dated 11 May 2023, requested a deferment of the schedule of the first relinquishment from 26 September 2024 to 30 September 2026 and the Council considered this request during the twenty-eighth session, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, and approved the request for deferment,<sup>2</sup> and that, as a result, the contractor would be required to submit its first relinquishment of at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 30 September 2026, and its second relinquishment of at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 26 September 2026,

*Noting further* that the Government of India, by letter dated 28 November 2024, requested a two-year deferment of the schedule of the second relinquishment from 26 September 2026 to 30 September 2028,

*Recognizing* that the contractor has cited residual impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the overlapping schedules of the first and second relinquishments as exceptional circumstances necessitating the deferment,

*Recalling* that, pursuant to regulation 27, paragraph 6, of the regulations, the Council may, at the request of the contractor and on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment, and that such exceptional circumstances shall include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor,

*Considering* that the Legal and Technical Commission has found that the reasons presented by the Government of India qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”, and has recommended deferring the schedule of the second relinquishment by two years to 30 September 2028,

<sup>1</sup> ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex.

<sup>2</sup> ISBA/28/C/22.



*Acting upon* the recommendation of the Commission,

1. Determines that the reasons presented by the Government of India qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”;
  2. Defers the schedule of the second relinquishment to 30 September 2028, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission;
  3. Requests the Secretary-General to communicate the present decision to the Government of India.
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## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 14

### **Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session**

## **Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the second part of its thirtieth session**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The second part of the thirtieth session of the Legal and Technical Commission of the International Seabed Authority was held from 23 June to 4 July 2025, with 30 members in attendance. Mariamalia Rodríguez Chaves and Joshua Tiwangye Tuhumwire contributed remotely in working group meetings. The Commission noted that all eligible members who applied to the voluntary trust fund to defray costs associated with their participation in accordance with document [ISBA/23/A/12](#) received funding and were able to participate in the meetings.

### **II. Activities of the contractors**

#### **A. Report on the status of the contracts for exploration and periodic reviews of the implementation of plans of work for exploration**

2. On 23 June, the Commission took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of contracts for exploration, noting the update from one contractor regarding its internal corporate changes between January and May 2025, information on the status of periodic reviews conducted by the secretariat and the installation of submarine cables in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.

3. The Commission requested that the secretariat continue to keep it informed. Further discussions took place between members of the Commission and the secretariat on its input to the review process for the periodic review of contractors (see [ISBA/30/C/2/Add.1](#)).



## **B. Implementation of training programmes under plans of work for exploration and allocation of training opportunities**

4. On 23 June, the Commission heard a briefing on the implementation of training programmes since its previous meeting. Members emphasized the importance of continuous assessment of the mid- to long-term impacts of contractors' training programmes on beneficiaries and their overall contribution to knowledge development and participation in activities in the Area by their respective countries.

5. Members also emphasized the need to increase the visibility of training opportunities to encourage more applications from different regions and from women, with the aim of improving geographical balance and gender parity. The Commission underscored the vital role of member States in promoting the contractors' training programme nationally and nominating more candidates to expand and diversify the applicant pool.

6. On 3 July, the Commission finalized the selection of 37 candidates (from a total of 319 applicants) to participate in 10 training programmes offered by eight contractors. A detailed breakdown of the selection of candidates for training programmes under plans of work for exploration conducted between March and July 2025 is provided in document [ISBA/30/LTC/8](#). The Commission notes that progress is being made in the current rankings towards achieving gender parity and that the current selection ratio is 60 per cent men to 40 per cent women.

## **C. Consideration of annual reports of contractors**

### **Identification of contractors that have responded inadequately, or failed to respond, to the calls from the Council to address issues of concern identified by the Commission in relation to their contractual obligations**

7. The Commission continued work initiated during the twenty-ninth session on assessing contractors whose performance had been identified as potentially not being fully aligned with their contractual obligations with the Authority, in accordance with the criteria set out in document [ISBA/29/LTC/5](#).

8. During the intersessional period, from 4 to 6 May, the Commission, through the secretariat and in accordance with the applicable modalities (see [ISBA/29/LTC/6](#)), held informal virtual exchanges with five of the eight contractors initially identified as needing to provide further clarification following the assessment of their responses to the Commission's initial questions.

9. In line with the agreed procedure, the Commission determined that the following four contractors required continued attention regarding their performance and alignment with their contractual obligations:

(a) UK Seabed Resources Ltd. I and II. The Commission reviewed communications received from the contractors, which they also made available to members of the Authority. The Commission noted that the ongoing bankruptcy proceedings of the contractors' parent company had put all activities on hold, leaving them unable to provide any information on future planned activities at present. While the Commission will continue to monitor developments, it observed that the contractors are currently unable to effectively continue performing in accordance with their approved plans of work. The Commission looks forward to the resolution of the bankruptcy process, as well as to receiving information on any revised plans of work and how these revisions will ensure that the contractors meet their performance obligations;

(b) Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd. The Commission took note of information provided by the contractor, which is also publicly available, regarding the termination of its agreement with its implementing partner, which has rendered the contractor unable to continue performing in accordance with its plan of work. In line with section 24.1 of the regulations on exploration and the standard clauses, the contractor informed the Commission that it has asked the Secretary-General to revise its contract while temporarily suspending its obligations until a new partner is engaged. The Commission will continue to monitor developments and the contractor's performance. It looks forward to receiving updates on the search for a new partner, as well as information on a revised plan of work outlining how the contractor will comply with its obligations;

(c) Cook Islands Investment Corporation. The Commission noted that the contractor has asked the Secretary-General to adjust its five-year programme of work, citing various factors aligned with industry best practices, current economic conditions and regulatory challenges. During its engagement with the contractor and given what was assessed as continued inadequate performance in implementing its plan of work, the Commission observed that the request for adjustment was driven by, among other things, regulatory uncertainty stemming from the unfinished regulations on exploitation, difficulties in fostering investor confidence and the volatility of the mineral market. While the Commission will continue to monitor the contractor's performance and looks forward to receiving updates on the requested adjustment and how the contractor intends to fulfil its contractual obligations under the revised plan of work, it considers it important to bring the broader policy issue of invoking regulatory uncertainty to ask for an adjustment to the attention of the Council.

10. In the second part of its session, the Commission continued to review instances of inadequate performance and identified other contractors requiring specific attention for the next review cycle, in line with the applicable modalities. To this end, the Commission requested that the secretariat communicate its concerns to those contractors, with a view to undertaking a review of the responses provided in 2026.

### **General comments from the evaluation of annual reports**

11. During the second part of its thirtieth session, the Commission considered 30 annual reports on activities carried out by contractors in 2024, submitted pursuant to section 10 of the standard clauses of contracts for exploration. The Commission expressed appreciation to the secretariat for its support in the evaluation of the annual reports. Following extant practice, the Commission set up three working groups to review the following aspects of the annual reports: legal, financial and training; geological and technological; and environmental. It dedicated 8 of the 10 days of its meetings to the consideration of the annual reports within the respective working groups

### **Legal, financial and training aspects**

12. The Commission noted that expenditure levels for a number of contractors had been far lower than estimated and reiterated that explanations of the variance should be provided by contractors who have not done so. Some contractors, however, reported much higher expenditures, indicating strong commitment to their exploration work.

13. The Commission also noted that, while contractors have generally performed adequately, a number have limited their offshore exploration activities, including environmental studies and sampling. Instead, they focused on desk work and data analysis, invoking reasons related to, inter alia, the continued absence of a regulatory

framework for exploitation, uncertainties in global economic conditions and best industry practices. Although this does not constitute an instance of inadequate performance, the Commission considered it relevant to be brought to the Council's attention. The Commission also noted that some contractors had already asked for adjustments to their plans of work and/or programmes of activities. Negotiations with the secretariat on this are ongoing.

14. The Commission noted that a number of contractors referred to their training obligations and to the difficulties that arose in addressing training commitments foreseen for 2025, due to the decision of the secretariat to discontinue some training options that had been negotiated and agreed with those contractors, in particular the DeepDive and national expert deployment programmes. Some contractors have successfully negotiated and agreed new schedules with the secretariat, and others are in the process of doing so. The Commission is aware of this and considers such a situation beyond the contractor's control for the assessment of their training obligations during the current reporting year. The Commission also noted with concern that some contractors systematically defer their training obligations and as a result now have multiple pending training obligations.

### **Geological and technological aspects**

15. The Commission notes that, in general, contractors have performed their activities in accordance with their approved plans of work. Contractors who have undertaken activities beyond their planned scope for 2024 are commended. Contractors who have not achieved their planned objectives are encouraged to reassess their strategies and take the steps necessary to get their schedules back on track. The Commission notes the discovery by one contractor of new polymetallic massive sulphide fields.

16. The Commission also noted that most contractors have provided satisfactory responses to the geological and technical questions raised in previous reviews of their reports. Most reports were structured in line with the reporting template recommended by the Commission (see [ISBA/21/LTC/15](#) and [ISBA/21/LTC/15/Corr.1](#)). The Commission notes that not all contractors are fulfilling their data deposit obligations and reminds them that they must comply fully with all requirements outlined in the template, particularly section III (e.g. ship track, navigation and bathymetry). It also noted that contractors should improve the delivery and quality of digital data and emphasized the need to follow the reporting templates as a critical aspect for comprehensive and efficient data management and use.

17. The Commission notes that only a few contractors have made significant progress in testing mining components. Several contractors have not provided information on mining and processing technologies. The Commission observes that several contractors approaching the final five years of their contracts have yet to undertake resource estimation or begin developing mining equipment and testing protocols in preparation for the exploitation phase. It requests that contractors nearing the end of their contracts provide information on their strategies for transitioning to exploitation.

### **Environmental aspects**

18. Several contractors presented robust scientific studies in their annual reports. They did not specify, however, how this feeds into their plans for environmental baseline assessments, which serve as the basis for environmental impact assessments.

19. The Commission noted that there were still two major baseline data requirements that have not been adequately addressed by contractors: (a) systematic surface observations of seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles and other megafauna;

and (b) sampling of pelagic biological communities (in the water column). The Commission notes that, in relation to the environmental baseline studies, several contractors are still not adequately addressing the requirements for sampling efforts and replication for robust statistical analyses (see [ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.3](#)).

20. The Commission reiterates the need to improve the definition and level of description in the programme of activities included in the annual reports of some contractors. In several instances, contractors gave no indication of the level of sampling effort and spatial distribution in the following year. Some contractors have submitted annual reports with numerous and/or long appendices. While the Commission appreciates contractors making these appendices available, it encourages them to summarize the main methods and findings in the annual report. Moreover, it would like to stress that annual reports are meant to be complete, stand-alone documents and should contain a brief account of the methodology, including sampling design (illustrated with maps) and applied analytical techniques even if they have previously been reported.

**D. Consideration of applications for extension of contracts in accordance with the procedures and criteria for the extension of an approved plan of work for exploration pursuant to section 1, paragraph 9, of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982**

21. On 3 July, the Commission took note of the anticipated applications for extension of contracts. The Commission will work during the intersessional period to ensure that the submission and review of applications for extension are carried out in line with the process established in document [ISBA/21/C/19](#). As informed by the secretariat, a total of eight contracts for polymetallic nodules (with Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya, the Government of the Republic of Korea, China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association, Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd., the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany and Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.) and one for polymetallic sulphides (with China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association) are due to expire in 2026. It is expected that in 2025 and 2026 the Commission will need to consider their applications for extensions. A note will be prepared by the Commission with the support of the secretariat to assist contractors with their applications.

**E. Relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts**

22. On 23 June, the Commission took note of the relinquishment of two thirds of the contract area allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation under its contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts (see [ISBA/30/C/7](#)).

23. Also on 23 June, the Commission concluded its consideration of the request for deferment of relinquishment submitted by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer ([ISBA/30/LTC/2](#)), which it had begun examining during the first part of the session. The Commission also reviewed a request from the Government of Poland for a two-year deferment of its first relinquishment to

11 February 2028 and its second relinquishment to 11 February 2030 ([ISBA/30/LTC/7](#)).

24. The Commission, having examined the justifications and detailed information provided by both contractors, including the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with their respective operational activities, recommends that the Council approve both requests for deferment as contained in the draft decisions in annexes I and II to the present report.

## **F. Review of the environmental impact statements submitted by contractors**

25. On 1 July, the Commission concluded its review of the environmental impact statement submitted by Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation (BPC) (see [ISBA/30/LTC/4](#)). The Commission reviewed the statement for completeness, accuracy and statistical reliability in accordance with the recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area ([ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.3](#)).

26. BPC submitted an environmental impact statement for testing a polymetallic nodule collector and buffer station in its contract area in the North-West Pacific in the second half of 2025. The sea trials will last approximately 30 days and will include 100.5 hours of underwater mineral collection testing. The collection trajectory will extend less than 31.5 km. The test will be conducted within a 0.25 km<sup>2</sup> test area. The depth of disturbance is expected to be about 6 cm of surface sediment. According to numerical modelling, the sediment plume from the collector test area may have a maximum vertical dispersion to 230 m above the seafloor (though most simulations were lower) and have a maximum diffusion distance of 5.4 km. Up to 7,500 tons of wet nodules will be collected, none of which will be lifted to the surface.

27. On 14 March, the secretariat transmitted an initial set of questions from the Commission to BPC, requesting additional information. Responses were received during the intersessional period, on 24 March and 10 April. Subsequently, the Commission sent a further set of questions to BPC on 19 June, to which responses were provided on 23 June.

28. The Commission considered that the environmental impact statement is well organized and well written and incorporates the elements required pursuant to annex III to the recommendations. It was noted that the contractor had incorporated suggestions arising from public consultation and comments from the secretariat. In addition, the contractor had responded to the Commission's comments and questions and had incorporated its suggestions. The Commission considered, among other things, the technology of the mining system, the limited nature of the biological baseline data, the assessment provided of test impacts and the appropriateness of the monitoring plans. To ensure that the test survey design was robust, the discussion involved exchanges to evaluate sampling locations, numbers and density of sampling stations and gear types in their monitoring surveys, especially in their designated impact reference zone and collector test area.

29. A number of improvements to the monitoring plan design were suggested by the Commission, of which BPC took careful note and which it agreed to implement, including the collection of additional benthic fauna samples prior to the collector test to further supplement the environmental baseline. The Commission concluded that the contractor had evaluated the main sources of risk from the impacts of the test and

was satisfied with the assessment that the impacts are sufficiently localized to not cause a risk of serious harm.

30. In conclusion, the Commission has reviewed the environmental impact statement for completeness, accuracy and statistical reliability in accordance with the recommendations and has undertaken an exchange of questions and answers with the applicant. It recommends that the Secretary-General incorporate the environmental impact statements into the programme of activities under the exploration contract of BPC. The final revised environmental impact statement document incorporating the revisions from the Commission's interactions with the contractor will be published on the website of the Authority in due course.

### **III. Regulatory activities of the Authority**

#### **A. Development of environmental threshold values**

31. On 30 June, the Commission took note of the progress made by the intersessional expert group with respect to the development of environmental threshold values for toxicity, turbidity and settling of resuspended sediments, as well as underwater noise and light pollution.

32. The Commission took note of the proposed approach to consider levels of impact along a spatial and temporal gradient away from the source of disturbance. It noted that such an approach is based on a sound scientific basis and would allow the consideration of varying levels of environmental change, as well as help to identify the effects of the pressures on ecosystems, including cumulative effects. It also noted that such an approach could guide environmental monitoring and mitigation efforts. The approach would also be useful in informing decisions of the Council regarding the level of harm that would be considered acceptable.

33. The Commission recalled that the development and review of threshold values relates to other parts of the regulatory framework, including other standards and guidelines and the draft regulations on exploitation. The Commission took note of the revised timeline for finalization of the draft report of the intersessional expert group and its release for stakeholder consultations, currently projected for the fourth quarter of 2025.

#### **B. Development of standards and guidelines for activities in the Area**

34. On 24 June, the Commission took note of the status of work in relation to the development of standards and guidelines to support exploitation in the Area. It recalled that, at the twenty-fifth session, in 2020, the Council had endorsed the development of standards and guidelines based on a three-phase, outcome-oriented approach (see [ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1](#), sect. IV.A and annex).

35. The Commission recalled that, during the twenty-seventh session, in 2022, it had delivered to the Council for its consideration and adoption 10 standards and guidelines from phase 1 as well as a report summarizing the stakeholder feedback.<sup>1</sup> The phase 1 standards and guidelines, once considered by the Council, would be important supplements to the draft regulations on exploitation and, as such, already contain important elements relevant to the revision of the list of possible standards

<sup>1</sup> See [ISBA/27/C/2](#) and the draft standards and guidelines for phases 1–10 contained in documents [ISBA/27/C/3](#), [ISBA/27/C/4](#), [ISBA/27/C/5](#), [ISBA/27/C/6](#) and [ISBA/27/C/6/Corr.1](#), [ISBA/27/C/7](#), [ISBA/27/C/8](#), [ISBA/27/C/9](#), [ISBA/27/C/10](#), [ISBA/27/C/11](#) and [ISBA/27/C/12](#).



and guidelines currently under discussion by the Council. The Commission noted that, once it receives guidance from the Council on what next steps are required and the nature of the review required for the existing phase 1 standards and guidelines, it would consider the matter, for which sufficient resources would need to be allocated. It considered that the three-phase, outcome-oriented approach continues to be the right approach and would allow for structured completion of the relevant standards and guidelines once the exploitation regulations are finalized.

## **IV. Environmental management planning**

### **A. Development of regional environmental management plans in priority areas**

36. On 27 June, the Commission heard a briefing on recent activities related to the development of regional environmental management plans for the North-West Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

37. The Commission noted that three expert workshops had been convened, in 2018, 2020 and 2024, to support the development of the regional environmental management plan for the Area of the North-West Pacific Ocean.<sup>2</sup> The Commission also discussed the results of the intersessional work led by the Co-Chairs of the expert workshops to advance the description of a proposed network of area-based management tools, based on the outcomes of the workshops and the scientific criteria set out in the recommendations on technical guidance for the development of regional environmental management plans (ISBA/29/LTC/8). It is noted that the proposed network of area-based management tools, together with its scientific rationale, will serve as a basis for management-focused assessment in the next step of the regional environmental management plan development process.

38. The Commission heard a briefing on the results of the scientific workshop on the development of the regional environmental management plan for the Area of the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the mid-ocean ridges and the Central Indian Ocean Basin, held in Qingdao, China, from 27 April to 1 May 2025. The workshop built on the results of a previous workshop held in Chennai, India, in 2023 and further reviewed scientific data and information and, on this basis, the identification of potential area-based management tools for that region.<sup>3</sup>

39. The Commission noted that the outcomes of the expert workshops provided a solid scientific evidence base for formulating the key elements of the regional environmental management plans for the North-West Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. In light of this, the Commission discussed the next steps for the development of the plans and decided to work intersessionally within its regional environmental management plan working group to prepare for the next phase of expert deliberations, which would focus on management assessment and drafting of the plans. Although both regions will be considered, the discussions on the regional environmental management plan for the North-West Pacific are more advanced and would be pursued as the priority region. The plan structure will be aligned with the template in

<sup>2</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/publications/technical-study-23-towards-the-development-of-a-regional-environmental-management-plan-for-cobalt-rich-ferromanganese-crusts-in-the-northwest-pacific-ocean](http://www.isa.org.jm/publications/technical-study-23-towards-the-development-of-a-regional-environmental-management-plan-for-cobalt-rich-ferromanganese-crusts-in-the-northwest-pacific-ocean) (2018 report), [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NWP\\_REMP\\_workshop\\_report.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NWP_REMP_workshop_report.pdf) (2020 report) and [www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-regional-environmental-management-plan-for-the-area-of-the-northwest-pacific-2](http://www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-regional-environmental-management-plan-for-the-area-of-the-northwest-pacific-2) (2024 report).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-remp-for-the-area-of-the-indian-ocean-with-a-focus-on-the-mid-ocean-ridges-and-central-indian-ocean-basin](http://www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-remp-for-the-area-of-the-indian-ocean-with-a-focus-on-the-mid-ocean-ridges-and-central-indian-ocean-basin).

the standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans (see [ISBA/30/C/3](#)).

## **V. Data management**

40. On 30 June, the Commission took note of a presentation by the secretariat introducing draft terms of reference for a comprehensive study of the Authority's data infrastructure and management. The study will assess the current digital infrastructure, identify gaps and opportunities and propose a future-proof framework for the Authority. The Commission emphasized prioritizing resources for data management, recognizing its critical role in effective data collection, analysis, monitoring and compliance.

## **VI. Other matters**

41. The Commission took note of the key outcomes of the second expert scoping workshop, entitled "Charting future horizons: harnessing advanced technologies for the protection and sustainable use of the international seabed area", which focused on monitoring and was hosted by Kobe University and co-organized by the secretariat and the Kobe Ocean-Bottom Exploration Centre from 10 to 12 June. Some members of the Commission attended the workshop either online or in-person. The workshop was aimed at showcasing new and improved technologies that can support the efficient collection of scientific information from remote areas of the seafloor. The Commission noted that such technological advancements could enable more effective execution of environmental impact studies and other testing activities by contractors. The Commission discussed transferrable industry innovations that had been successfully applied in offshore mining industries.

## Annex I

### **Draft decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* that, on 18 November 2014, the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer) entered into a contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge with the Authority,

*Recalling also* regulation 27, paragraph 2, of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area,<sup>1</sup> which refers to the schedule of relinquishments of the area allocated to contractors,

*Noting* that, according to the schedule, Ifremer was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 18 November 2022, being the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, and at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 18 November 2024, being the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract,

*Noting also* that Ifremer, by letter dated 10 May 2022 addressed to the Secretary-General, requested a one-year deferment of the relinquishment schedule to 18 November 2023 for the first relinquishment and to 18 November 2025 for the second relinquishment and that the Council, at its twenty-seventh session, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, approved the request to defer the relinquishment schedule by one year, so that the first relinquishment of 50 per cent of the contract area would have been due on 18 November 2023 and the second and final relinquishment of 75 per cent of the contract area would be due on 18 November 2025,

*Noting further* that Ifremer, by letter dated 18 June 2024 addressed to the Secretary-General, requested a further deferment of the schedule of the second and final relinquishment by one year, from 18 November 2025 to 18 November 2026,

*Recognizing* that the contractor has cited the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its residual impacts on the scheduling of its exploration cruises, the maintenance regime of its research vessel and the completion and operational commissioning of its autonomous underwater vehicle (Ulyx), inter alia, as exceptional circumstances justifying the deferment,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* that, pursuant to regulation 27, paragraph 6, of the regulations, the Council may, at the request of the contractor and on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment, and that such exceptional circumstances shall include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor,

*Considering* that the Legal and Technical Commission has found that the reasons presented by Ifremer qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor” and has recommended the deferment of the schedule of the second relinquishment by two years, to 18 November 2026,

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<sup>1</sup> ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex.

<sup>2</sup> ISBA/30/LTC/2, paras. 5–8.

*Acting upon* the recommendation of the Commission,

1. *Determines* that the reasons presented by Ifremer qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”;
2. *Defers* the schedule of the second relinquishment to 18 November 2026, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission;
3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to communicate the present decision to Ifremer.

## Annex II

### **Draft decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Government of Poland**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* that, on 12 February 2018, the Government of Poland entered into a contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge with the Authority,

*Recalling also* regulation 27, paragraph 2, of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area,<sup>1</sup> which refers to the schedule of relinquishments of the area allocated to contractors,

*Noting* that, according to the schedule, the Government of Poland is required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 11 February 2026, being the end of the eighth year from the date on which the contract was signed, and to relinquish at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 11 February 2028, being the end of the tenth year from the date on which the contract was signed,

*Noting also* that the Government of Poland, by letter dated 30 April 2025, requested a two-year deferment to 11 February 2028 for the first relinquishment and to 11 February 2030 for the second relinquishment to enable it to better examine and understand its contract area and fulfil its contractual obligations,

*Recognizing* that the contractor has cited exceptional circumstances necessitating the deferment, including residual impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on its exploration activities as well as the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine along the eastern border of Poland and its effects on the economy and government priorities of Poland,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* that, pursuant to regulation 27, paragraph 6, of the regulations, the Council may, at the request of the contractor and on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment and that such exceptional circumstances shall include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor,

*Considering* that the Legal and Technical Commission has found that the reasons presented by the Government of Poland qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor” and has recommended deferring the schedule of the first relinquishment to 11 February 2028 and of the second relinquishment to 11 February 2030,

*Acting upon* the recommendation of the Commission,

1. *Determines* that the reasons presented by the Government of Poland qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”;

2. *Defers* the schedule of the first relinquishment to 11 February 2028 and of the second relinquishment to 11 February 2030, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission;

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<sup>1</sup> ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex.

<sup>2</sup> ISBA/30/LTC/7, paras. 4–10.

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to communicate the present decision to the Government of Poland.

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## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part I

Kingston, 17–28 March 2025

## Statement of the President on the work of the Council of the International Seabed Authority during the first part of the thirtieth session

### I. Opening of the session

1. At the 325th meeting of the Council, on 17 March 2025, the President for the twenty-ninth session, Olav Myklebust (Norway), opened the first part of the thirtieth session. The Council met from 17 to 28 March.

### II. Adoption of the agenda

2. At the 325th meeting, the President invited the Council to consider the provisional agenda of the Council ([ISBA/30/C/L.1/Rev.1](#)). At its 328th meeting, on 19 March, the Council adopted the agenda for its thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/C/1](#)).

### III. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Council

3. At its 326th meeting, on 17 March, the Council elected by acclamation Duncan Muhumuza Laki (Uganda) as President of the Council for its thirtieth session.

4. At the same meeting, the Council elected Brazil (Latin American and Caribbean States) and France (Western European and other States) as Vice-Presidents.

5. At its 327th meeting, on 18 March, the Council elected Singapore (Asia-Pacific States) as Vice-President.

### IV. Report of the Secretary-General on the credentials of members of the Council

6. At the 329th meeting, on 27 March, the Secretary-General presented the report on credentials. Credentials had been received from 32 members of the Council, and notes verbales from four members of the Council for the purpose of accreditation.



## V. Status of the contracts for exploration and related matters

7. At the 329th meeting, the Council considered and took note of a report on the status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration ([ISBA/30/C/2](#)).

## VI. Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area

8. At its 326th meeting, the Council took up agenda item 11, on the consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. All subsequent discussions on the draft regulations took place in informal settings of the Council, open to participation by members of the Authority and observers.

9. In line with the revised road map, which was endorsed by the Council on 26 July 2024 to guide its work during the thirtieth session (see [ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1](#), annex III), and the President's briefing note of 28 January 2025,<sup>1</sup> the President presented the revised consolidated text of the draft regulations,<sup>2</sup> the revised suspense document<sup>3</sup> and the updated compilation of proposals.<sup>4</sup> The President also suggested the working modalities for the first part of the thirtieth session.

10. The President highlighted that the primary objective of the revised consolidated text was to facilitate informal discussions within the Council, harmonize and streamline the draft regulations and support the Council in finalizing its work on the draft regulations. Furthermore, the President underlined that achieving legal certainty was a fundamental objective of the drafting process and that the revised consolidated text should seek to establish clear, enforceable provisions that minimize ambiguities, strengthen regulatory compliance and foster confidence among stakeholders. This goal necessitates a thorough review of the document's language, structure and cross-references to ensure its integrity and effectiveness as a codified legal instrument.

11. From 17 to 28 March, the President presided over the negotiations on the draft regulations through regulation-by-regulation discussion, and completed the reading of the revised consolidated text from the preamble to draft regulation 55. With regard to the preamble, the Council agreed on the use of the term "harmful effects", which was preferred to the alternative text "serious harm", as it was considered more consistent with the wording of article 145 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition, there was broad convergence on the text of various draft regulations. At the same time, several new cross-cutting issues were identified for further discussion, such as the nature and placement of regional environmental management plans, the application of the regulations to the Enterprise concerning reserved areas, and the placement of some environmental elements under a general environmental policy of the Authority. During the negotiations, a number of delegations expressed support for the newly introduced draft regulation 29 ter on the certification of origin for minerals recovered in the Area, proposed by the Legal and Technical Commission during the twenty-ninth session. There was broad support for maintaining draft regulation 44 ter on environmental goals and objectives in the

<sup>1</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Presidents-Briefing-Note-on-the-Revised-Consolidated-Text-13Mar2025.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Presidents-Briefing-Note-on-the-Revised-Consolidated-Text-13Mar2025.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-1](http://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-1).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-2](http://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-2).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Compilation\\_of\\_Proposals.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Compilation_of_Proposals.pdf).



regulations, and some delegations showed flexibility in respect of deferring such a regulation to a general policy of the Authority.

12. On 20 March, the Council held a thematic discussion on underwater cultural heritage, which was facilitated by the Federated States of Micronesia on behalf of the informal group on underwater cultural heritage. There was strong support for the use of draft regulation 35 alt, proposed by the group, rather than draft regulation 35 as a basis to continue the discussion. There was also strong support for the continued work of the group in respect of other regulations, and work to continue in a cross-cutting manner was welcomed.

13. In addition, a joint proposal was presented by the delegations of Belgium, China and Germany on test and pilot mining, currently included in draft regulations 48, 48 alt and 48 alt 2. The work of the group was warmly welcomed by members of the Authority and observers and was considered a very important development and a product of joint cooperation. During the discussion on draft regulation 49, a brief summary of the proposal for restructuring the section dedicated to environmental management and monitoring was presented by Norway and welcomed by other members of the Authority and observers.

14. On the margins of the meetings, four informal working groups held informal meetings on thematic issues: the inspection, compliance and enforcement mechanism, facilitated by Norway; the equalization measure, facilitated by Australia; the rights and interests of coastal States, facilitated by Portugal; and test and pilot mining, facilitated by Belgium, China and Germany.

#### *High-level discussions on standards and guidelines*

15. At the 330th meeting, on 27 March, the Council conducted a high-level discussion on standards and guidelines, as set out in the revised road map. The President indicated that it was anticipated in the draft regulations that standards and guidelines should be developed to support the implementation of the regulations. The President reminded participants that the Legal and Technical Commission, as endorsed by the Council, had recommended that an outcome-based approach should be used and that the standards and guidelines should be put in place in three phases (see [ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1](#), sect. IV.A and annex).

16. The President indicated that, upon the request of some delegations, the secretariat had prepared a schedule, or list of standards and guidelines, to assist in the discussions.<sup>5</sup> He emphasized that this was a working document intended solely as a guidance tool and should be updated as negotiations on the regulations progress.

17. Several delegations expressed support for developing standards and guidelines in a coordinated and transparent manner alongside the ongoing negotiations on the draft regulations. Others, however, emphasized the need for the Council to focus primarily on negotiating the regulations on exploitation. Some emphasized the importance of prioritizing the revision of phase 1 by the Legal and Technical Commission and of developing phases 2 and 3. Delegations also agreed that attention should be given to establishing a clear placement hierarchy and a procedural framework, including a formal stakeholder consultation procedure, as well as their period review. Delegations thanked the secretariat for the list and proposed that it be maintained as a living document, regularly updated in line with the progress of the negotiations on the regulations. Some delegations proposed that specific changes be made to the content of the list and that some of the changes be grouped, harmonized or streamlined to

<sup>5</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Draft-list-of-Standards-and-Guidelines-ISBA30.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Draft-list-of-Standards-and-Guidelines-ISBA30.pdf).

minimize the administrative overhead. Delegations also proposed setting clear timelines for the Commission to finalize the changes for each phase, identifying criteria to distinguish whether matters should be covered under the regulations or addressed as standards or guidelines.

18. The President thanked the members of the Authority for their comments and highlighted the support for the schedule as a good working modality that could continue to be updated. He also committed to preparing an updated proposal, for discussion during the Council meetings in July 2025, along with a revised schedule outlining the next steps for advancing the Council's work, to ensure that the Council has a structured and efficient approach to moving forward.

*Reports to the President by facilitators and rapporteurs*

19. At its 332nd meeting, on 28 March, the Council took note of the oral report by the delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia,<sup>6</sup> acting as rapporteur of the informal working group on underwater cultural heritage, on the thematic discussion held on 20 March, as it was the only informal group to hold a thematic discussion during the first part of the session. In addition, the Council was reminded that the other informal groups would report when the corresponding regulation is discussed in the Council.

*Review of progress on the draft regulations*

20. The President underlined that, during the first part of the thirtieth session, the Council had engaged in constructive negotiations on key provisions of the draft regulations on exploitation, from the preamble to draft regulation 55. Meaningful progress had been made in refining the text, clarifying positions and identifying areas in which further work was needed. It was agreed to defer consideration of outstanding cross-cutting issues to the relevant informal working group in order to cover them in a more comprehensive manner. The list of current informal working groups is contained in annex I.

21. The President also commended the informal working groups for their successful and constructive work, meeting during the mornings and lunch breaks. In the light of their effectiveness, he encouraged member States to continue that practice during the Council meetings in July 2025. To ensure broad participation, it was emphasized that such informal meetings should be scheduled well in advance, allowing members of the Authority and observers to plan accordingly.

*Agreement on necessary intersessional work*

22. At its 330th and 332nd meetings, the President proposed an additional modality of work: an informal arrangement of volunteer facilitators designated as "Friends of the President" (see annex II). Their role would be to collaborate with interested delegations to refine specific topics or draft regulations. The arrangement is voluntary, informal and time-limited, ensuring that progress is made without introducing new procedural complexities.

23. The proposal was warmly welcomed and endorsed in general by the Council, subject to minor adjustments to its text. Some delegations suggested that it would be beneficial to have a joint calendar on the Authority's website, providing information on the various smaller groups, their areas of focus, deadlines for deliverables and meeting links. Some delegations also noted that time zone differences could pose challenges for intersessional online meetings and suggested using written proposals

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250328-Oral-report-by-Micronesia-UCH.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250328-Oral-report-by-Micronesia-UCH.pdf).

as an alternative. A few delegations encouraged the facilitators of the existing informal working groups and the Friends of the President to submit their proposals one month before the meetings in July 2025.

24. With regard to the negotiations of the draft regulations, the delegation of Chile, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, requested that if a text proposal has received substantive support, that circumstance should be reflected in the text. The Group also proposed establishing a transitional process between sessions, considering the change in the Council presidency. This would involve coordination between the outgoing President and the incoming nominee to exchange views on the text of the draft regulations during the preparatory phase. In this context, the Group recommended that each regional group nominate a representative at the close of the prior session.

## **VII. Further consideration of actions that the Council may take if an application were submitted before the Council has completed the rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation**

25. At its 331st meeting, on 28 March, the delegation of Nauru presented a document titled “Explanatory non-paper: proposed procedure for consideration and provisional approval of applications for plans of work for exploitation under paragraph 15 (c) of the 1994 Agreement”.<sup>7</sup> The delegation explained that it was working with its contractor, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. (NORI), to prepare an application for a plan of work for exploitation, intended to be submitted on 27 June 2025. The delegation noted that the objective of the document was to assist member States in their consideration of a proposed procedure for the consideration and provisional approval of an application for a plan of work for exploitation in the absence of adopted rules, regulations and procedures on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. The delegation added that the document was not intended to be discussed in that meeting, but during the intersessional period.

26. Several delegations took the floor to express their views. Some emphasized that the next steps must focus on continuing the negotiations on the regulations on exploitation and developing an Authority’s general policy on the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Various delegations expressed concern about the pace of negotiations on the draft regulations. Some delegations highlighted the legal and practical challenges of assessing an application for a plan of work under the two-year rule, while others maintained that the Convention and the 1994 Agreement clearly set out the applicable procedure. Several delegations highlighted previous Council decisions adopted by consensus, emphasizing that the commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area should not be carried out in the absence of the rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation.

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Explanatory\\_Non\\_Paper\\_Proposed\\_Procedure\\_for\\_Consideration-and-Provisional-Approval-of-Applications-for-Plans-of-Work-for-Exploitation-under-Paragraph-15c-of-the-1994-Agreement-1.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Explanatory_Non_Paper_Proposed_Procedure_for_Consideration-and-Provisional-Approval-of-Applications-for-Plans-of-Work-for-Exploitation-under-Paragraph-15c-of-the-1994-Agreement-1.pdf).

## **VIII. Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session**

27. At its 329th meeting, the President introduced the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/C/4](#)).

28. The Council was also invited to consider a revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans (see [ISBA/30/C/3](#)). Some delegations recognized the progress made by the Commission in reviewing this standardized procedure, as well as its openness to incorporating substantive observations from States and observers.

29. Delegations commended the Commission for its hard work. Many delegations congratulated Erasmo Lara-Cabrera and Sissel Eriksen for their re-election as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission. Several delegations expressed concern regarding the low attendance recorded at the Commission meeting and called for member States to provide the support necessary to ensure that the nominated members of the Commission attend the meetings. The President stated that the secretariat used the voluntary trust fund to support all Commission members from developing countries who requested financial assistance to attend the meeting and called for further contributions to the fund to ensure sufficient participation in the meetings in July 2025.

30. Many delegations commended the Commission for its constant efforts to respond to the requests of the Council while fulfilling its oversight, regulatory and environmental responsibilities in the Area. Many also welcomed the progress in the development of environmental threshold values and stated that they appreciated the constructive collaborative approach of engaging with independent experts.

31. Several delegations acknowledged the process adopted by the Commission to identify contractors whose performance may not be fully aligned with their contractual obligations, including holding exchanges of views with identified contractors between sessions, in line with the modalities set out in document [ISBA/29/LTC/6](#). Some delegations stressed the need for the Commission to provide the names of contractors that had responded insufficiently or incompletely, or failed to respond, to the calls from the Council to address issues of concern identified by the Commission in relation to their contractual obligations.

32. Many delegations underlined the importance of the contractor's training programme and its significant implication for the capacity-building of developing countries.

33. Some delegations recognized the commitment and efforts of the Commission to enhance engagement, openness and transparency in its work, including holding open meetings where appropriate and in accordance with its rules of procedure, and welcomed its exploration of new modalities, such as informal webinars, to engage with stakeholders on non-confidential aspects of its work.

34. At its 330th meeting, the Council approved the request by the Government of India to defer the schedule of the second relinquishment to 30 September 2028 regarding the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean (see [ISBA/30/C/6](#)).

## IX. Other matters

35. At its 331st meeting, the Council took up agenda item 20, Other matters, pursuant to rule 30, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the Council. The Secretary-General informed the Council of the announcement made on 27 March by The Metals Company that its subsidiary, TMC USA, had initiated the process of applying for commercial recovery permits under the Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act of the United States of America of 1980. She expressed the view that it was imperative to reaffirm the Authority's exclusive mandate. The Authority remains the sole organization through which States Parties shall, in accordance with Part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, in particular in administering its resources. She emphasized that any unilateral action would constitute a violation of international law and directly undermine the fundamental principles of multilateralism, the peaceful use of the oceans and the collective governance framework established under the Convention. She underlined that she remained firmly dedicated to the Authority's mandate, ensuring that activities in the Area are conducted for the benefit of all humankind. Taking note of the continued commitment of the Council to advancing negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation, she reaffirmed the secretariat's full commitment to supporting member States in the critical steps ahead.

36. Delegations expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General for her statement and reaffirmed their full support for her, the Authority and the Convention as a cornerstone of the multilateral system. Several delegations underscored that the Convention explicitly established that no State, natural person or legal entity may claim sovereignty, exercise sovereign rights or appropriate any part of the Area or its resources. Delegations also voiced serious concerns and disappointment regarding the decision by TMC USA, recalling the Council's decisions in 2023, in which it had made clear that commercial exploitation should not be carried out in the absence of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation. In that context, a number of delegations reaffirmed their commitment to continue to engage in the process in good faith, in order to create a governance framework that serves the collective interest of humankind against unilateral actions. Some delegations cautioned that delays in the negotiations could complicate the situation even more. Delegations also underlined that the principle of the common heritage of humankind, as provided for in article 136 of the Convention, was not only a rule under public international law, but also a rule of customary international law, a norm that is also binding on States that are not Parties to the Convention that have, through State practice, accepted Part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement as a norm of *jus cogens*, a non-derogable norm under international law.

## Annex I

### List of current informal working groups

<i>Group number</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Rapporteur(s)</i>
1.	Effective control (Cross-cutting issues and draft regulations 5, 6, 13, 21, 24 and 40, annex I, sect. I, para. 13 ter, definition in schedule)	Chile and Costa Rica
2.	Inspection, compliance and enforcement mechanism (Draft regulation 102)	Norway
3.	Equalization measure (Draft regulation 64 bis and draft equalization standard)	Australia
4.	Rights and interests of coastal States (Cross-cutting issues)	Portugal and Singapore
5.	Underwater cultural heritage (Cross-cutting issues, including draft regulations 35 and 35 alt)	Brazil, Greece and Micronesia (Federated States of)
6.	Environmental management and monitoring (Sect. 3 of part IV, draft regulations 49–52 and annex VII)	Norway
7.	Test mining (Draft regulations 48 ter and 48 ter alt.)	Belgium, China and Germany
8.	Closure plans (Part VI, draft regulations 59–61)	Fiji
9.	Reference to regional environmental management plans (Cross-cutting issues)	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)

## Annex II

### **Proposal by the President of the Council on an additional modality of work, designated as “Friends of the President”**

28 March 2025

1. To advance discussions efficiently, the President proposes to the Council of the International Seabed Authority an additional modality of work, an informal arrangement designated as “Friends of the President”. This voluntary initiative would allow delegations interested in a specific topic or draft regulation to facilitate focused and flexible discussions to refine the text and build consensus. A special list of Friends of the President will be published, distinct from the list of the current informal working groups (see annex I above), once volunteers have signed up as Friends of the President.

2. Under the arrangement, the Friends of the President would coordinate with interested delegations to develop agreed text on a specific topic or draft regulation for inclusion in the draft regulations by the conclusion of the thirtieth session. These topics or draft regulations should be distinct from those currently being addressed by the informal working groups. The arrangement would likely work best on specific topics or draft regulations for which there is already some level of agreement but further efforts are needed to agree on specific language.

3. The details of the arrangement are as follows:

(a) A Friend of the President shall coordinate with delegations with a particular interest in a specific topic or draft regulation, with a goal of producing relevant text agreed upon by the group. Friends of the President are free to explore various discussion methods, including intersessional videoconference meetings, written comments and in-person side meetings during the Council meetings in July 2025;

(b) Friends of the President are encouraged to submit the text agreed upon by the group to the President and the secretariat by 27 June to allow sufficient time for publication on the Authority’s website and its analysis by delegations. Friends of the President may prioritize the submission by 27 June of text related to specific topics or draft regulations that were not discussed during the Council meetings in March 2025. Submissions by Friends of the President will continue to be accepted until the end of the thirtieth session and will be uploaded to the Authority’s website;

(c) During the reading of the revised consolidated text<sup>1</sup> throughout the Council meetings in July 2025, upon reaching a draft regulation with a proposed text submitted by a Friend of the President, the Friend shall take the floor to present the text (previously uploaded to the Authority’s webpage), after which other delegations shall be invited to provide comments;

(d) The substantive work of a Friend of the President shall be completed once the text is turned around and included in the draft regulations by the end of the thirtieth session, unless the President requests, and the Friend in question agrees, to extend the arrangement for another session;

(e) Friends of the President may hold informal meetings during morning or lunch breaks throughout the Council meetings in July 2025, should they and the members of their group find it necessary;

<sup>1</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf).

(f) A delegation may volunteer to become a Friend of the President at any time from March 2025 until the end of the thirtieth session.

4. Interactions with existing working modalities:

(a) The arrangement is distinct from and does not replace or preclude other working modalities or the existing informal working groups. It may operate in parallel with other working modalities;

(b) The arrangement differs from existing working groups in that: (i) the expected deliverables by Friends of the President are limited only to text to be included in the draft regulations; (ii) the substantive work of a Friend of the President is completed once the text is included in the draft regulation; (iii) Friends of the President shall report to the President and present their text to the Council at the reading of the revised consolidated text.

5. This approach offers several benefits:

(a) It provides an additional, flexible pathway for advancing discussions;

(b) It encourages ownership of the text among delegations;

(c) It complements, rather than replaces, existing working groups;

(d) It is voluntary, informal and time-limited, ensuring efficiency without adding procedural complexities.

6. Delegations interested in serving as Friends of the President are invited to express their interest to the secretariat at any time from 28 March 2025, during the intersessional period.

7. In a spirit of transparency and inclusivity, a list of Friends of the President will be made available to all delegations and updated regularly on the Authority's website. The list of Friends of the President will include the name of the delegation, the topic on which it is working, meeting dates and deadlines, the type of interaction (e.g. videoconference, written comments, email or WhatsApp), the texts under discussion or documents submitted by members of the group, and the final text submitted. If the group decides to hold meetings during the Council meetings in July 2025, the list will also include relevant details such as meeting dates, format, room numbers and any additional documents.





## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II  
Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

## **Statement by the President on the work of the Council of the International Seabed Authority during the second part of the thirtieth session**

### **Addendum**

#### **I. Resumption of the session**

1. At the 333rd meeting of the Council of the International Seabed Authority, on 7 July 2025, the President of the Council, Duncan Muhumuza Laki (Uganda), declared open the second part of the thirtieth session of the Council. During the second part of the session, held from 7 to 21 July 2025, the Council convened seven plenary meetings (333rd to 339th meetings) and 14 informal meetings.

#### **II. Report of the Secretary-General on the credentials of members of the Council**

2. At the 335th meeting of the Council, on 14 July, the Secretary-General reported that, as at that date, formal credentials had been received from 33 members of the Council, and information concerning the appointment of representatives had been communicated by means of facsimile or initialled notes verbales from ministries, embassies, permanent missions to the United Nations, permanent missions to the Authority or other government offices or authorities.

#### **III. Election to fill a vacancy on the Legal and Technical Commission in accordance with article 163, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

3. At its 335th meeting, the Council elected Rodrigo Miguel Urquiza Caroca (Chile) to fill a vacancy on the Legal and Technical Commission resulting from the resignation of Andrés Camaño Moreno (see [ISBA/30/C/13](#)).



#### **IV. Status of contracts for exploration and related matters**

4. At its 335th meeting, the Council took note of the addenda to the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration ([ISBA/30/C/2/Add.1](#) and [ISBA/30/C/2/Add.2](#)).

5. At the same meeting, the Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the relinquishment of two thirds of the area allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation under the contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed between the Ministry and the Authority ([ISBA/30/C/7](#)).

#### **V. Report of the Secretary-General on the status of national legislation relating to deep seabed mining and related matters**

6. At its 335th meeting, the Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the laws, regulations and administrative measures adopted by sponsoring States and other members of the Authority with respect to the activities in the Area, and related matters ([ISBA/30/C/9](#)).

#### **VI. Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area**

7. At its 333rd meeting, on 7 July, the Council took up agenda item 11 on the consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. All subsequent discussions on the draft regulations took place in informal meetings from 7 to 18 July, with the full participation of other members of the Authority and observers, in line with the revised road map for the thirtieth session of the Council, introduced by the President of the Council on 26 July 2024 and endorsed by the Council ([ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1](#), annex III). The President of the Council introduced his briefing paper on the negotiations on the draft regulations and associated modalities of work for the second part of the twenty-ninth session of the Council, dated 4 June 2025,<sup>1</sup> and resumed the reading of the revised consolidated text, beginning with draft regulation 56.<sup>2</sup>

8. The plenary of the Council held 14 informal meetings on the President's revised consolidated text, from 7 to 18 July. The Council finished the reading of the second part of the text, covering draft regulations 56 to 107. This signified a noteworthy achievement for the thirtieth session of the Council in a broader context, since the Council could revise the entire revised consolidated text, which had been issued on 10 January 2025, during the first and second part of the session.

9. The Council held six focused discussions: on 8 July, by the informal working group on equalization measures, for draft regulation 64 bis and standards, facilitated by Australia; on 9 July, by the Group of Friends of the President on the review of the payment mechanism, for draft regulations 81 and 82, facilitated by Canada; on 10 July, by the informal working group on part XI and the inspection, compliance and enforcement mechanism, draft regulation 102, facilitated by Norway; on 15 July, by

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Presidents-Briefing-Paper-for-2nd-part-30th-session-v20250604.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Presidents-Briefing-Paper-for-2nd-part-30th-session-v20250604.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf).

the Group of Friends of the President on submarine cable protection, facilitated by Singapore, and the Group of Friends of the President on the environmental compensation fund, facilitated by Mexico; and on 17 July, by the informal working group on underwater cultural heritage, facilitated by Brazil, Greece and the Federated States of Micronesia.

10. On the sidelines of the Council meeting, the following groups held a total of seven informal meetings: the informal working group on the rights and interests of coastal States, facilitated by Portugal and Singapore, on 10 July; the informal working group on effective control, facilitated by Chile and Costa Rica, on 11 and 17 July; the Group of Friends of the President on the environmental compensation fund, draft regulations 54 to 56, facilitated by Mexico, on 11 July; the informal working group on environmental management and monitoring, section 3 of part IV, draft regulations 49 to 52 and annex VII, facilitated by Norway, also on 11 July; the Group of Friends of the President on the review of the payment mechanism, draft regulations 81 and 82, facilitated by Canada, on 15 July; and the informal working group on references to regional environmental management plans, facilitated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, also on 15 July.

11. During the intersessional period and during the second part of the thirtieth session, seven Groups of Friends of the Presidents were created (see annex).

12. Regarding the discussion on the 13 annexes, the appendix and the schedule, the Council held a conceptual exchange, as proposed by the President, rather than proceeding line by line. The President suggested the possible establishment of a new Group of Friends of the President for some annexes to streamline their texts and prepare a version that could serve as a basis for building consensus. In addition, the Council agreed with the President's proposal to retain some annexes within the scope of existing informal working groups or Groups of Friends of the President currently reviewing them. It was also agreed to cluster certain annexes by subject matter. One delegation proposed that this approach be extended beyond the annexes to the draft regulations as a whole. There was broad agreement that limiting the proliferation of the number of Groups of Friends of the President would help to facilitate the participation of delegations, especially smaller ones during the intersessional period. The President will present a list of the annexes along with suggested corresponding working groups or Groups of Friends of the President to support the intersessional work.

13. As proposed by the President, the Council agreed to defer consideration of the schedule for the time being. It was noted that several key definitions were being addressed within the context of ongoing work by specific informal working groups. Some of these definitions are closely linked to broader, unresolved issues. Accordingly, the Council agreed that these definitions will remain with the groups currently examining them. Once those groups submit agreed language that may serve as a basis for consensus, the Council will be in a better position to consider incorporation into the schedule.

14. With regard to the informal working groups and Groups of Friends of the President, the Council agreed that the secretariat should upload the list of groups for the forthcoming intersessional period. This list should include the scheduled dates of online meetings and the relevant supporting documentation. In this context, some participants proposed reducing the number of online meetings held each week during the intersessional period, in order to facilitate the effective participation of smaller delegations.

15. At its 338th meeting, on 18 July, the Council adopted a decision on a thematic approach to the continuation of the elaboration of rules, regulations and procedures

relating to exploitation to resolve remaining key outstanding matters, for which the Council defined some lines for the intersessional work and the thematic approach for negotiations of the exploitation regulations during the thirty-first session of the Council (see [ISBA/30/C/18](#)).

16. At the same meeting, the President referred to the revised draft list of standards and guidelines associated with the draft regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.<sup>3</sup> The Council agreed to defer further consideration of this matter to its next session, under the agenda item relating to the draft regulations on exploitation.

17. At its 339th meeting, on 21 July, the Council took on the review of the status of advancement on draft regulations, including text proposed by the informal working groups and Groups of Friends of the President, and the next steps. The Council endorsed the proposal by the President to encourage the informal working groups and Groups of Friends of the President to continue their efforts during the intersessional period, with the aim of advancing the text as far as possible towards a version that could serve as a basis for consensus. As for the next steps on the negotiation of the regulations on exploitation, the President requested the Council to refer to its decision on a thematic approach adopted by on 18 July (*ibid.*).

18. At the same meeting, the Council took note of the various proposals regarding deadlines for the submission of comments on the revised consolidated text. Taking these proposals into account, the President suggested that the deadline for submissions from delegations be set for 15 September 2025, while inputs from the informal working groups and Groups of Friends of the President be submitted by 1 December 2025. In addition, the Council agreed to request the secretariat to prepare a further revised consolidated text reflecting the discussions held during the thirtieth session and to upload it to the Authority's website well in advance of the first meeting of the thirty-first session, in accordance with paragraph 3 of the decision on a thematic approach (*ibid.*).

## **VII. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2024 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission**

19. At its 335th meeting, the Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2024 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Commission ([ISBA/30/C/10](#)).

## **VIII. Report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise**

20. At its 335th meeting, the Council took note of the report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise, Eden Charles.

21. The interim Director General submitted his second report, on activities undertaken from July 2024 to May 2025, in accordance with the Enterprise's mandate under article 170 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and section 2 of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (1994 Agreement). In his oral presentation, he emphasized the importance of the Enterprise's role as the

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ISBA\\_30\\_C\\_CRP.5-Updated-draft-list-of-Standards-and-or-Guidelines-associated-with-the-draft-regulations-final-11072025.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ISBA_30_C_CRP.5-Updated-draft-list-of-Standards-and-or-Guidelines-associated-with-the-draft-regulations-final-11072025.pdf).

Authority celebrates its thirtieth anniversary, reiterating his responsibility to act under the general policies of the Assembly and the directives of the Council.

22. In the report, he outlined progress made across several key areas, despite the continued constraints of limited resources. These included participation in Council negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation, engagement in intersessional working groups and advancement of preparations for the eventual independent operation of the Enterprise. He also reported on efforts related to joint venture arrangements, funding options, technological cooperation and capacity-building initiatives.

23. Council members received the report favourably, with several participants congratulating the interim Director General for his continued efforts. He expressed appreciation for the feedback received and committed himself to providing further concrete information in his next report, as he continues to discharge his mandate.

## **IX. Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission**

24. At its 334th meeting, on 9 July, the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission, Erasmo Lara Cabrera (Mexico), delivered an oral report on the work of the Commission at the second part of its thirtieth session, from 23 June to 4 July 2025.

25. Participants expressed strong support for the Commission's work. Several participants commented on specific items. With regard to the contractors' training programmes, many participants expressed satisfaction with the number of training positions offered and, while noting that some important training programmes had been unilaterally cancelled by the secretariat, noted the continued efforts made by the secretariat to increase the number of women who qualified for training programmes. Some participants noted the progress that had been made by the Commission in addressing potential cases of non-compliance by contractors. Many participants also stressed the importance of the work of the environmental threshold value group and encouraged further progress. They expressed appreciation for the meticulous work done by the Commission and acknowledged the importance of its efforts in enhancing environmental protection measures.

26. In response to the comments raised, the Chair of the Commission noted that, in relation to the process of identification of potential cases of non-compliance by contractors, a significant amount of work had been achieved and that a balanced assessment procedure had been developed. He welcomed the number of positive reactions to the development of the different documents pertaining to regional environmental management plans. He addressed comments on annual reports by contractors, noting that significant work had been done. Positive reactions to the work on regional environmental management plans were noted. The Chair highlighted the inclusion, in the annex to the report, of a rationale for comments on the standardized procedure, which contained an explanation as to why some comments were not taken into consideration. The Secretary-General concluded the discussion by thanking the Commission for the work accomplished and called upon all members of the Authority to contribute to the voluntary trust fund, while noting that the vast majority of the Commission's members had been able to attend and participate in its meetings.

27. At its 335th meeting, the Council took note of the written report of the Chair of the Commission on the work of the Commission at the second part of its thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/C/4/Add.1](#)).

*Deferral of the schedule of relinquishment of the areas allocated under contracts for exploration*

28. At the 335th meeting, the Council adopted two decisions on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment as requested by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (see [ISBA/C/30/14](#)) and the Government of Poland (see [ISBA/C/30/15](#)).

*Revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans*

29. At its 334th meeting, the Council discussed the draft revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans ([ISBA/30/C/3](#)). Participants expressed the hope that these tools could be developed and implemented as soon as possible. Some participants proposed specific amendments concerning the purpose and binding nature of regional environmental management plans, with a view to ensuring their effective integration into the regulatory framework and to providing clear and enforceable guidelines for environmental management. Participants also underscored the importance of enhanced collaboration with contractors in both the development and implementation of such plans. It was emphasized that strengthened cooperation between the Authority, contractors and other relevant stakeholders would contribute to more comprehensive and effective environmental management outcomes. Following consultations among participants, the Council agreed to incorporate a number of adjustments to the draft revised standardized procedure, which ultimately led to its adoption.

30. At its 338th meeting, the Council adopted the standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans ([ISBA/30/C/20](#)). The decision is a significant step forward in the Authority's environmental governance, as it formalizes a process started in 2020, providing a formalized, predictable and science-driven framework for regional environmental planning, upholding the Authority's obligation to protect the marine environment in the Area for the benefit of humankind. In the decision, the Council requested the Commission and the secretariat to apply the revised standardized procedure and associated templates and recommendations in future regional environmental management plans. The Commission is requested to prioritize the development and review of regional environmental management plans for areas with existing exploration contracts, based on the best available science and ongoing or planned activities. Likewise, the Council encouraged member States, contractors, sponsoring States, international organizations and stakeholders to actively contribute data, expertise and knowledge to the regional environmental management plan process, in accordance with the new procedure.

*Decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Commission*

31. At its 339th meeting, the Council adopted a decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Commission ([ISBA/30/C/19](#)).

## **X. Report of the Secretary-General concerning the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission**

32. At its 335th meeting, the Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission ([ISBA/30/C/11](#)), which included a proposed draft decision for its operationalization.

33. While delegations agreed on the importance of the Commission and generally expressed support for its operationalization, some delegations asked questions on modalities, timing, financial implications and procedural readiness for its establishment and full operation. There is broad agreement that the Commission must be operational before any plan of work is approved, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Participants highlighted the importance of balanced geographical representation, especially from affected developing States. Emphasis was also placed on cost implications and the need for input from the Finance Committee, as well as the development of a clear election mechanism.

34. At its 338th meeting, the Council adopted a decision on the operationalization of the Commission ([ISBA/30/C/17](#)). The Council decided to initiate the necessary steps to operationalize the Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Council, in line with articles 151, 163 and 164 of the Convention and the relevant sections of the 1994 Agreement. To that end, the secretariat was requested to prepare a proposal on the mechanism for electing the members of the Commission, with technical input from the Legal and Technical Commission. This proposal is to be considered by the Council during the first part of its thirty-first session. Furthermore, the Finance Committee was tasked with assessing the financial implications of establishing the Economic Planning Commission and to provide a report during the second part of the thirty-first session on the most practical timeline for when the Commission can commence its work. In addition, the Council decided to keep the matter under review, indicating ongoing oversight and flexibility in implementation.

## **XI. Report of the Finance Committee**

35. At its 337th meeting, on 17 July, the Chair of the Finance Committee Kenneth Wong, presented the report of the Committee on its work during the thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/A/8-ISBA/30/C/12](#)). The Council took note of the report.

36. The Secretary-General, in her statement, reaffirmed her commitment to organizational excellence, transparency, accountability and delivering on the Authority's mandate and the trust she had received from member States when she was elected.

37. A number of participants welcomed the Committee's progress on the issue of equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits arising from activities in the Area. Several participants underscored the importance of developing a fair and inclusive benefit-sharing mechanism, in line with articles 140, 148 and 160 (2) (g) of the Convention. Participants noted the progress made by the Committee in its discussions on the establishment of a common heritage fund as an alternative to complement the direct distribution of monetary benefits. The Committee recommended to the Council and Assembly that the secretariat develop the concept of the common heritage fund as a way for income from activities in the Area to be distributed in accordance with the Convention, indicating that the concept should be accompanied by a comprehensive report describing and explaining the concept and detailing the legal rules applicable to the fund and the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority, which may regulate, limit or restrict the usage or application of the fund's resources. While several participants expressed support for the proposed common heritage fund as a way to distribute income from activities in the Area, some requested the Committee to continue working on other options, including direct distribution, and to submit all options for the consideration of member States. Some participants suggested that the issue be included as an agenda item for future Council and Assembly sessions to enable further in-depth discussions.

38. The Chair of the Committee underlined the Committee's request to the secretariat to take appropriate measures to avoid budget overruns during the financial



period 2025–2026. The Committee requested the secretariat to provide an update on the staffing tables and a detailed breakdown of consultants recruited in 2025. The Chair of the Committee noted that the report on standards of accommodation for air travel requested at the twenty-ninth session showed that the secretariat had followed the travel policies in a manner consistent with United Nations standards for the financial period 2023–2024. The Committee requested the Secretary-General to keep the matter as a standing item on its agenda.

39. The Chair also noted that, after considering the audited financial statements of the Authority for 2024, no adverse observations had been made by the auditor. A number of participants welcomed the opinion of the auditor and commended the secretariat for the prudent financial management of the resources of the Authority for the period 2023–2024. Participants also echoed the request by the Committee for a breakdown of the use of miscellaneous and interest income.

40. Delegations took note of the implementation of the budget for the financial period 2023–2024 and encouraged continued cost-saving measures and sound financial management to avoid overruns during the financial period 2025–2026. Several delegations supported the proposed increase of an annual overhead charge per contract from 1 January 2027, highlighting the necessity of providing contractors with sufficient time in advance to prepare for the increase.

41. The Chair informed the Council that, following a review of the bids received for the appointment of an independent auditor for the financial period 2025–2026, the Committee recommended the reappointment of Calvert Gordon Associates. Some participants suggested that the Authority consider the possibility of engaging the United Nations Board of Auditors, even if that would be at a higher cost and would need to be financed.

42. Many participants expressed concern about the number of member States in arrears, particularly those with outstanding contributions exceeding two years, and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue her efforts to recover those arrears, including through bilateral efforts. With respect to voluntary trust funds, many participants acknowledged their importance and expressed appreciation to the donors for supporting the participation of member States from developing countries in the work of the Council and the Legal and Technical Commission, and encouraged timely and increased contributions. The President of the Council encouraged private individuals to contribute, citing his own example of a personal donation of \$555. He underscored that no effort was too small to make a meaningful difference.

43. The Chair also noted in his report that the Committee had conducted a robust debate on the note by the Secretary-General regarding the restructuring of the Secretariat ([ISBA/30/A/7](#)) and had exchanged views on the legal framework and condition of the restructuring situation, without coming to a conclusion. The Committee discussed paragraph 19 of its report submitted at the twenty-ninth session ([ISBA/29/A/9-ISBA/29/C/20](#)) regarding the reclassification of posts within the secretariat. The Committee reiterated its recommendation that, in future, no reclassification decision be implemented without prior approval of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Committee. Some members expressed concern about the ongoing legal proceedings before the Joint Appeals Board and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal. Members requested the secretariat to provide an update and an overview of potential financial scenarios, while noting the confidential nature of the proceedings. Members requested to be kept informed of the progress of the legal proceedings.

44. A delegation noted that the Joint Appeals Board had been temporarily dismantled without explanation at a time that coincided with complaints from former staff members of unfair human resources actions, and highlighted that such structures



were put in place to ensure the integrity of the Authority. Some participants underscored the need to ensure that the treatment and well-being of the staff be accorded the highest priority to support the work and mandate of the Authority.

45. During the discussion in the Council, many participants expressed concerns regarding the restructuring undertaken by Secretary-General since January 2025, including by asking questions on the reclassification of posts within the secretariat, which should be done with the approval of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, as requested in the decision of the Assembly relating to the budget of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026 ([ISBA/29/A/11](#)), on the recommendation of the Committee in paragraph 19 of its report submitted at the twenty-ninth session. Some participants underscored the need for the Authority to abide by the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance at a time when it faces significant challenges to protect the credibility of the organization. Some also requested that the Committee share their considerations in assessing the legal framework and condition of the recent restructuring of the secretariat. It was further noted that the previous restructuring of the secretariat had been carried out following a periodic review pursuant to article 154 of the Convention. Some participants expressed further concern at the adoption of an administrative instruction on 6 January 2025 ([ISBA/ST/AI/2023/3/Amend.2](#)), in which the Secretary-General had authorized herself to directly reclassify positions as a result of restructuring without requiring prior submission in accordance with standard classification procedures. Some participants requested that the administrative instruction be revoked without further delay. In response, the secretariat confirmed that administrative instruction [ISBA/ST/AI/2023/3/Amend.2](#) had been withdrawn with immediate effect.

46. Participants noted that this matter should be kept under review and reiterated the request made by the Committee to the secretariat to provide an update on the staffing table as well as a breakdown of consultants hired since January 2025 to ensure full oversight, transparency and accountability to member States. One delegation suggested considering the diversification of control and evaluation instruments, including, where appropriate, through dialogue with internal mechanisms of the United Nations system such as the Office of Internal Oversight Services, with the view to ensuring independent oversight and further strengthening the audit mechanisms already in place.

47. Several participants requested that, given the Committee's increasing workload and the need for enhanced oversight of the Authority's financial and administrative matters, additional time should be allocated to its meetings. It was further suggested that the Committee be enabled to advance its work through online intersessional meetings starting in 2026, in line with the practice established in recent years.

48. At the 337th meeting, the Council adopted a decision relating to financial and budgetary matters ([ISBA/30/C/16](#)).

## **XII. Dates of the next session**

49. At its 339th meeting, the Council took note of the indicative dates of the thirty-first session of the Council that the secretariat had arranged three years in advance, in close coordination with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the United Nations:

Part I, 16–27 March 2026 (10 days)

Part II, 13 July–24 July 2026 (10 days)

Part III, 28 October–6 November 2026 (8 days, to be confirmed)

50. Some participants highlighted the potential conflict with the dates of the third session of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, scheduled for 23 March to 2 April 2026. The secretariat clarified that it had not been informed of any potential conflict with the dates of the third session of the Preparatory Commission announced on 30 April 2025.

51. The President, noting that many delegates would be involved in both part I of the thirty-first session of the Council and the third session of the Preparatory Commission, requested the secretariat to promptly undertake consultations with the relevant offices of the United Nations to explore the possibility of adjusting the dates of part I of the thirty-first session of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council, currently scheduled for 2 to 13 March and 16 to 27 March 2026, respectively, with a view to avoiding a conflict in the meetings of the Authority and Preparatory Commission.

52. Should such an adjustment be deemed necessary, it would be implemented in accordance with rule 4 of the rules of procedure of the Council, which provides for the alteration of the dates of a regular session.

## Annex

### Council of the International Seabed Authority

#### List of Groups of Friends of the President

<i>Group number</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Convening delegation</i>
1.	Submarine cable protection (Draft regulations 31 and 31 bis)	Singapore
2.	Review of the payment mechanism (Draft regulations 81 and 82, and relevant standards)	Canada
3.	Modification of a plan of work by a contractor (Draft regulation 57)	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
4.	Environmental compensation fund (Draft regulations 54, 55 and 56)	Mexico
5.	Seabed mining register (Draft regulation 92)	India
6.	Prevention of corruption (Draft regulation 40)	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)
7.	Environmental goals and objectives (Draft regulation 44 ter)	Germany
8.	Non-compliance notice, suspension and termination of exploitation contract (Draft regulation 103)	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)



## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part I

Kingston, 17–28 March 2025

Agenda item 14

**Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on  
the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session**

## **Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Government of India**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* that, on 26 September 2016, the Government of India entered into a contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean with the Authority,

*Recalling also* regulation 27, paragraph 2, of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area,<sup>1</sup> which refers to the schedule of relinquishments of the area allocated to contractors,

*Noting* that, according to the schedule, the Government of India was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original contract area allocated to it by 26 September 2024, being the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, and at least 75 per cent of the original contract area allocated to it by 26 September 2026, being the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract,

*Noting also* that the Government of India, by letter dated 11 May 2023, requested a deferment of the schedule of the first relinquishment from 26 September 2024 to 30 September 2026 and the Council considered this request during the twenty-eighth session, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, and approved the request for deferment,<sup>2</sup> and that, as a result, the contractor would be required to submit its first relinquishment of at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 30 September 2026, and its second relinquishment of at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 26 September 2026,

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<sup>1</sup> ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex.

<sup>2</sup> ISBA/28/C/22.



*Noting further* that the Government of India, by letter dated 28 November 2024, requested a two-year deferment of the schedule of the second relinquishment from 26 September 2026 to 30 September 2028,

*Recognizing* that the contractor has cited residual impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the overlapping schedules of the first and second relinquishments as exceptional circumstances necessitating the deferment,

*Recalling* that, pursuant to regulation 27, paragraph 6, of the regulations, the Council may, at the request of the contractor and on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment, and that such exceptional circumstances shall include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor,

*Considering* that the Legal and Technical Commission has found that the reasons presented by the Government of India qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”, and has recommended deferring the schedule of the second relinquishment by two years to 30 September 2028,

*Acting upon* the recommendation of the Commission,

1. *Determines* that the reasons presented by the Government of India qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”;
2. *Defers* the schedule of the second relinquishment to 30 September 2028, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission;
3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to communicate the present decision to the Government of India.

*330th meeting  
27 March 2025*



## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 7

**Status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

### **Report on the relinquishment of two thirds of the area allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation under the contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed between the Ministry and the International Seabed Authority**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

1. The contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation (the contractor) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 10 March 2015. The area under the contract initially covered 3,000 km<sup>2</sup>.
2. Pursuant to the schedule for fulfilling relinquishment obligations, as set out in regulation 27 (1) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area ([ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex), by the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, the contractor must have relinquished at least one third of the original area allocated to it; and by the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract, the contractor must have relinquished at least two thirds of the original area allocated to it.
3. Accordingly, on 9 March 2023, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General of the Authority cartographic material that included shapefiles of relinquished and remaining cells and an overview map of the remaining exploration areas. The Council, acting on the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, noted that the contractor had fulfilled the first part of the schedule of relinquishment obligations pursuant to regulation 27 (1).<sup>1</sup> The relinquished area reverted to the Area.

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<sup>1</sup> [ISBA/28/C/19](#).



4. During the second part of its thirtieth session, on the basis of the technical review carried out by the secretariat, the Legal and Technical Commission noted that the contractor had complied with its relinquishment obligations pursuant to the applicable regulations and the recommendations for the guidance of contractors on the relinquishment of areas under exploration contracts for polymetallic sulphides or cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts (ISBA/25/LTC/8).

5. The total original area, the maps of which are available at [https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MNRE-CFC\\_Relinquishment-Maps-Per-Cluster.pdf](https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MNRE-CFC_Relinquishment-Maps-Per-Cluster.pdf), consists of 143 blocks, with each block consisting of 16 cells and each cell measuring approximately 1.12 km x 1.12 km. The number of relinquished cells per cluster varies from 27 to 208. A total of 800 cells, comprising an area of 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>, were relinquished within nine clusters. The remaining area under exploration covers 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

6. The relinquished area has reverted to the Area.

7. The Council is invited to take note of the present note.

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## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 8

**Report of the Secretary-General on the status of national  
legislation relating to deep seabed mining and related matters**

## **Laws, regulations and administrative measures adopted by sponsoring States and other members of the International Seabed Authority with respect to the activities in the Area, and related matters**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

1. The present report is provided pursuant to the decision of the Council, at the seventeenth session of the Authority, in which it requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the laws, regulations and administrative measures adopted by sponsoring States and other members of the Authority with respect to the activities in the Area and invited sponsoring States and other members of the Authority, as appropriate, to provide information on, or the texts of, relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures to the secretariat ([ISBA/17/C/20](#), para. 3), and its subsequent decision to make this a standing item on its agenda on an annual basis ([ISBA/18/C/21](#), para. 4).

2. It is also recalled that, at the twenty-third session, in 2017, by its decision relating to the final report on the first periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Assembly invited sponsoring States, if they had not already done so, to review their respective national legislation to control activities by their sponsored entities, drawing on the advisory opinion of the Seabed Disputes Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ([ISBA/23/A/13](#), sect. B).

3. By note verbale dated 20 May 2025, the secretariat invited sponsoring States and other members of the Authority to submit to the secretariat the texts of relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures, or updates on their policy and legislative processes. As of June 2025, such texts had been received from Panama.

4. As of June 2025, the Authority's online database contained information on or the texts of relevant national legislation received from the following 40 States: Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, China, Cook Islands, Cuba, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, France, Georgia, Germany, Guyana, India, Japan,





Kenya, Kiribati, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Nigeria, Niue, Oman, Panama, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sudan, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Zambia. It also contains information received from the Pacific Community. The database contains further information and the texts of national laws, regulations and administrative measures submitted by the aforementioned member and observer States of the Authority,<sup>1</sup> and it will continue to be updated upon receipt of new information. A comparative study on national legislation concerning deep seabed mining is also available on the database.<sup>2</sup>

5. The Council is invited to take note of the present report.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/national-legislation-database](http://www.isa.org.jm/national-legislation-database).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Comparative\\_Study\\_NL.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Comparative_Study_NL.pdf).



# Council

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## Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 13

**Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of  
the decision of the Council in 2024 relating to the reports of  
the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission**

## **Implementation of the decision of the Council in 2024 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Background**

1. At its 312th meeting, on 8 November 2023, the Council of the International Seabed Authority adopted a decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission ([ISBA/28/C/27](#)). In paragraph 19 of the decision, the Council requested that annual reporting to it on the implementation of such decisions remain on its agenda as a standing item.
2. At its 324th meeting, on 26 July 2024, the Council adopted a decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Commission ([ISBA/29/C/24](#)), in which it requested the Secretary-General and the Commission to undertake a series of specific actions.
3. Part II of the present report provides information on the steps taken by the Secretary-General in response to specific requests made by the Council in its decision. Part III contains details of the work carried out by the Commission to address various requests of the Council. Part IV provides an update on the status of the voluntary trust funds, which support the participation of developing States in the meetings of the Council, the Commission and the Finance Committee.

#### **II. Actions to be taken by the Secretary-General**

4. In paragraph 6 of its decision of 26 July 2024, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue the practice of communicating the various issues identified during the Commission's review of contractors' annual reports to the relevant contractors and sponsoring States, to follow up in writing with contractors



that repeatedly perform insufficiently or incompletely against an approved plan of work or that have indicated that the implementation of the plan of activities will be made conditional on external factors regardless of the applicable contractual requirements, to request meetings with those contractors and to write to the respective sponsoring States to bring any issue to their attention and request a meeting with the sponsoring States to address it and to provide relevant information to the Council.

5. Following the usual practice, the Secretary-General conveyed the Commission's comments and recommendations to individual contractors and sponsoring States after evaluating the annual reports. In response, contractors included their replies in the annual reports for 2024, which will be reviewed by the Commission during the second part of the thirtieth session. In addition, during the seventh annual meeting of exploration contractors, on the theme "Fostering dialogue and collective actions for effective regulatory compliance of activities carried out in the Area", held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 30 September to 2 October 2024, contractors were briefed on matters relating to the development of regulations on exploitation, contract management and the contractual obligations of contractors. Discussions also covered the process for the identification of contractors at risk of non-compliance, contractors' priorities and concerns, collaboration among contractors and secretariat-driven initiatives. On the margins of the first part of the Council's meetings during the thirtieth session, in March 2025, the Secretary-General convened separate meetings with contractors and sponsoring States and highlighted that the various issues identified by the Commission should be addressed appropriately.

6. The Council's request is addressed in further detail in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration ([ISBA/30/C/2](#)), covering the period to 24 January 2025. An addendum to that report ([ISBA/30/C/2/Add.1](#)), to be submitted to the Council at the second part of its thirtieth session, will provide an update until 31 May 2025.

7. In paragraph 7 of its decision, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to report to it on an annual basis the instances of alleged non-compliance and regulatory action in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention and the regulations on prospecting and exploration identified by the Commission by, inter alia, taking into account the results of the Secretary-General's consultations with contractors, and urged the relevant sponsoring States to provide any information relating to such non-compliance and measures taken to ensure compliance under the relevant contracts for exploration, in accordance with article 139 of the Convention.

8. As at 31 May 2025, the Secretary-General had provided the necessary support, such as liaising with the identified contractors and facilitating an exchange of views between them and the Commission, to the Commission in identifying and assessing contractors at risk of non-compliance, in accordance with the criteria for identifying contractors that have responded insufficiently or incompletely, or failed to respond, to the calls from the Council to address issues identified by the Commission in relation to their contractual obligations ([ISBA/29/LTC/5](#)) and the modalities for facilitating an exchange of views between contractors and members of the Commission ([ISBA/29/LTC/6](#)). In the report of the Chair of the Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session ([ISBA/30/C/4](#)), the Commission informed the Council of its work in assessing the performance of contractors in accordance with the criteria and the modalities.

9. In paragraph 18 of its decision, the Council requested the Secretary-General to clarify the procedures and practices, including the timing, relating to communications

to members of the Authority and to the Commission regarding prospecting activities in the Area.

10. Pursuant to regulations 3 to 6 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration in the Area ([ISBA/19/C/17](#), annex; [ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex; and [ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex), a prospector shall notify the Authority of its intention to engage in prospecting. Each notification shall contain: (a) the name, nationality and address of the proposed prospector and its designated representative; (b) the coordinates of the broad area or areas within which prospecting is to be conducted; (c) a general description of the prospecting programme, including the proposed date of commencement and approximate duration; and (d) a satisfactory written undertaking that the proposed prospector will comply with the Convention and the relevant rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority. The Secretary-General shall acknowledge in writing receipt of each notification and shall review and act on the notification within 45 days of its receipt, if the notification conforms with the requirements of the Convention and the regulations, and shall inform the prospector in writing that the notification has been so recorded.

11. A prospector shall inform the Secretary-General in writing of any change in the information contained in the notification. The Secretary-General shall not release any particulars contained in the notification except with the written consent of the prospector and shall, from time to time, inform all members of the Authority of the identity of prospectors and the general areas in which prospecting is being conducted. A prospector shall immediately notify the Secretary-General in writing of any incident arising from prospecting that has caused, is causing or poses a threat of serious harm to the marine environment and, upon receipt of such a notification, the Secretary-General shall act in a manner consistent with the relevant regulations. A prospector shall, within 90 days of the end of each calendar year, submit a report to the Authority on the status of prospecting. These reports shall be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Commission for consideration at its next meeting.

### **III. Actions to be taken by the Legal and Technical Commission**

12. In paragraph 4 of its decision, the Council welcomed the submission by contractors of their annual reports within the prescribed deadline, but expressed concern that some contractors had not complied with the reporting requirements set out in the template issued by the Commission, and reiterated that contractors are required to report completely and in accordance with the reporting requirements of the Commission on activities in their contract area.

13. The Secretary-General conveyed the Commission's comments and recommendations to individual contractors after evaluating their annual reports. The Commission will continue to address the matter during the second part of the thirtieth session and is expected to provide an update to the Council accordingly.

14. In paragraph 10 of its decision, the Council recalled its request for the Commission to revise its draft procedure and criteria for consideration of a request for the transfer of rights and obligations under a contract for exploration ([ISBA/27/C/35](#), annex), once the Council has considered issues relating to the transfer of rights and obligations under a contract for exploitation in the draft regulations for exploitation, as well as relevant issues related to effective control.

15. The Commission has taken note of the Council's request and will take further action after the Council's consideration of the matter during the negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation.

16. In paragraph 12 of its decision, the Council expressed its appreciation for the Commission's work on revising the draft standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, the template with the minimum requirements and the recommendations on technical guidance to support the practical implementation of the standardized procedure and template. It invited member States and observers of the Authority to provide comments in writing within 90 days of the adoption of the decision, to be submitted to the Authority for the Commission's consideration, and requested the Commission to submit the revised documents with the rationale for its decisions to the Council before the first part of the thirtieth session.

17. The Commission has recommended a draft revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans ([ISBA/30/C/3](#)), which the Council will consider during the second part of its thirtieth session.

18. In paragraph 13 of its decision, the Council expressed its appreciation for the Commission's work on the development of the draft regional environmental management plan for the Area of the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge and requested the Commission to review the draft in the light of its standardized procedure and template for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, once adopted by the Council, and to ensure that all such plans, including those under consideration for the Area of the north-west Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, are developed in accordance with the standardized procedure and template.

19. The Commission has taken note of the Council's request and is expected to take further action after the Council's adoption of the standardized procedure and template.

20. In paragraph 15 of its decision, the Council reiterated the importance of transparency in the Authority and urged the Commission to hold open meetings, where appropriate and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission, while maintaining its effective operation and recognizing the need to ensure the appropriate confidentiality of data and information, so as to allow for greater transparency in its work, and in that regard welcomed the Commission's holding of an informal open dialogue in the margins of the second part of the Council's twenty-ninth session.

21. The Council's request has already been addressed in the report of the Chair of the Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session (see [ISBA/30/C/4](#), paras. 33–36).

#### **IV. Status of contributions to the voluntary trust fund to support the participation of members of the Commission**

22. In paragraph 17 of its decision, the Council called for contributions to the voluntary trust funds to support participation in the meetings of the Authority by developing States, including in the Council, the Commission and the Finance Committee, and requested the Secretary-General to report on the amount available in each fund at the start and end of each reporting period, as well as a breakdown, by meeting, of the number of developing States that received support from the funds.

23. The amount available in each fund at the start and end of the reporting period is shown in table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Amount available in the voluntary trust funds at the start and end of the reporting period**

(United States dollars)

<i>Voluntary trust fund</i>	<i>Amount available at the start of the reporting period (1 April 2024)</i>	<i>Amount available at the end of the reporting period (31 March 2025)</i>
Council	25 271	3 071
Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee	9 968	17 224

24. The breakdown by meeting of the number of developing States that received support from the voluntary trust funds is shown in table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Number of developing States that received support from the voluntary trust funds**

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Number of developing States</i>	
	<i>Second part of the twenty-ninth session (July 2024)</i>	<i>First part of the thirtieth session (March 2025)</i>
Meetings of the Council	3	5
Meetings of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee	16	11

25. Owing to general increases in the cost of air tickets, as well as the significant increase in the daily subsistence allowance for Kingston, the secretariat estimates that approximately \$190,000 will be needed to support the participation of all eligible members of the Commission and the Finance Committee in the second part of the thirtieth session. For the Commission's meetings in the second part of the thirtieth session, approximately \$170,000 is required.

## V. Recommendations

26. The Council is invited to take note of the present report and to provide such guidance as may be necessary.



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## Thirtieth session

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Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 16

### Report of the Secretary-General concerning the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission

## Operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the present report is to provide an update on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission since the previous report of the Secretary-General, dated 6 May 2022 (ISBA/27/C/25), in light of the advanced stage of the negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, and to propose to the members of the Council the next steps towards the operationalization of the Commission.

#### II. Background

2. At its 288th meeting, on 29 July 2022, during the second part of its twenty-seventh session, the Council took note of the above-mentioned report, discussed the legal and policy basis for the Economic Planning Commission and put forward suggestions regarding its composition and immediate focus, which would be to review the trends of and factors affecting the supply, demand and prices of metals that will be processed from minerals that may be derived from the Area, bearing in mind the interests of both importing and exporting countries, and in particular of the developing States among them. Most delegations in the Council agreed with the need to ensure the operationalization of the Commission before the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation. At the same time, some delegations shared the view that further consideration would be required owing to the financial implications of its operationalization on the budget of the International Seabed Authority. The Council agreed to keep the matter on its agenda.

3. At its 312th meeting, on 8 November 2023, during the third part of its twenty-eighth session, the Council discussed the report again and emphasized the need to prioritize the operationalization of the Commission, given the advanced stage of



negotiations on the regulations on exploitation. Delegates highlighted the Commission's important role in supporting developing countries that may experience serious adverse economic impacts from the activities in the Area and underlined the importance of establishing the economic assistance fund in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention (1994 Agreement). Some delegates called for equitable geographical representation and gender balance in the composition of the Commission.

### **III. Economic Planning Commission**

4. As stated in the previous report, the Economic Planning Commission is a subsidiary organ of the Council. The relevant provisions concerning the Commission are found in articles 151, 163 and 164 of the Convention and in sections 1 and 7 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. These provisions address the establishment, membership and functions of the Commission.

5. According to article 163, paragraph 2, of the Convention, the Economic Planning Commission is composed of 15 members, elected by the Council from among the candidates nominated by the States Parties. States Parties are to nominate candidates of the highest standards of competence and integrity with qualifications in the domain of competence of the Commission. Members of the Commission must have appropriate qualifications such as those relevant to mining, management of mineral resource activities, international trade or international economics. The Council must endeavour to ensure that the membership of the Commission reflects all appropriate qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

6. The substantive functions of the Economic Planning Commission are set out in article 164, paragraph 2, of the Convention. The 1994 Agreement contains several important modifications to the Commission's functions and the early performance thereof.

7. First, it is provided that the functions of the Economic Planning Commission are to be carried out by the Legal and Technical Commission until such time as the Council decides otherwise, or until the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation.

8. Second, the implementation of article 151, paragraph 10, of the Convention is further qualified in section 7 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, which serves to define the policy of the Authority in relation to assisting developing countries that suffer serious adverse effects on their export earnings or economies caused by activities in the Area and the principles on which the policy is based. The principles include the provision of assistance under section 7, paragraph 1 (a), of the 1994 Agreement, through an economic assistance fund created from a portion of the Authority's funds exceeding those necessary to cover the administrative expenses of the Authority. The amount set aside for this purpose is to be determined by the Council upon recommendation of the Finance Committee. Only funds from payments received from contractors, including the Enterprise, and voluntary contributions are to be credited to the fund.<sup>2</sup> All related provisions of the Convention, including article 164, paragraph 2, on the original functions of the Economic and Planning Commission, are to be interpreted accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 164, para. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation 5.8 of the Financial Regulations of the International Seabed Authority (ISBA/6/A/3, annex).



#### **IV. Work of the Legal and Technical Commission in performing the functions of the Economic Planning Commission**

9. As required in the 1994 Agreement, the Legal and Technical Commission has to date performed the functions of the Economic Planning Commission. Thus, at its twenty-sixth session, the Legal and Technical Commission took note of a study of the potential impact of polymetallic nodule production from the Area on the economies of the developing land-based producers of metals that were likely to be the most seriously affected (see [ISBA/26/C/12](#), para. 17, and [ISBA/26/C/12/Add.1](#), paras. 17-19).<sup>3</sup> The Commission made several recommendations to the Council, including that the Council consider continuing to address the substantive issues identified in the study.

10. The Legal and Technical Commission also recommended that the Council consider initiating a process for establishing an economic assistance fund in accordance with the 1994 Agreement. The Economic Planning Commission will need to set the criteria for access to the fund by developing countries adversely affected by activities in the Area.

11. In addition, the Legal and Technical Commission recommended that the Council consider whether the Economic Planning Commission should be operational before the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation, so as to be in a position to consider and study, in a structured and systematic way, the impacts on developing land-based producer States. In that regard, one of the tasks on which the Authority is to concentrate before the approval of a plan of work for exploitation is the study of the potential impact of mineral production from the Area on the economies of developing land-based producers of those metals that are likely to be most seriously affected, with a view to minimizing their difficulties and assisting them in their economic adjustment, taking into account the work already done by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.<sup>4</sup>

12. Furthermore, the Economic Planning Commission is to review the trends of and factors affecting the supply, demand and prices of metals that will be processed from minerals that may be derived from the Area, bearing in mind the interests of both importing and exporting countries, and in particular of the developing States among them.<sup>5</sup>

#### **V. Operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission and financial implications**

13. At its meetings during the twenty-ninth session and the first part of the thirtieth session, the Council reiterated that negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation were at an advanced stage. It also recalled the revised road map for the thirtieth session ([ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1](#), annex III), which was endorsed by the Council and reflects the shared determination to conclude negotiations on the regulations at the thirtieth session. In this context, the Council may consider that the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission has become a matter of priority.

<sup>3</sup> See also International Seabed Authority technical study No. 32, available at [www.isa.org.jm/publications/21773](http://www.isa.org.jm/publications/21773).

<sup>4</sup> 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, annex, sect. 1, para. 5 (e).

<sup>5</sup> Convention, art. 164, para. (2) (b), and 1994 Agreement, annex, sect. 1, para. 5 (d).

14. The Council may note that the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission does not imply that it will immediately assume its substantive responsibilities. For its operationalization, the first step is to have a clear road map for the election of its members, for the beginning of its meetings, for defining its workplan and for prioritizing its activities.

15. As mentioned in the previous report of the Secretary-General, to operationalize the Economic Planning Commission, the Council would have to hold an election for that purpose. Considering the need to provide ample opportunity for all States Parties to nominate candidates for election, it is assumed that the earliest that such an election could be held is in 2026.

16. It is noted that, in electing members of the Economic Planning Commission, due account must be taken of the need for equitable geographical representation and the representation of special interests. In addition, article 164, paragraph 1, of the Convention requires that the Commission include at least two members from developing States whose exports of the categories of metals processed from minerals to be derived from the Area have a substantial bearing upon their economies.

17. Members of the Economic Planning Commission are to be elected by the Council for a term of five years. The Council may wish to consider electing the members of the Commission during the second part of its thirty-first session, so that the Commission could start its mandate on 1 January 2027. The Council may note that at the present time it is not possible to synchronize the terms of office of the members of the Commission with those of the Legal and Technical Commission, since the current period of the latter's membership finishes at the end of 2027.

18. The operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission would have financial implications for the budget of the Authority. It would be necessary to allocate sufficient resources to service its meetings, prepare documentation and provide interpretation services. The cost of servicing a one-week meeting of the Commission at the early stage of functioning is estimated at \$115,000 (rent of the appropriate room at the Jamaica Conference Centre, \$2,500; documentation, \$17,500; interpretation, \$88,000; and miscellaneous services, \$7,000). This figure may increase once the Commission begins its substantive work and requires more documentation, staff and meeting time and, thus, a greater allocation of resources. However, this is not expected until 2028 or 2029.

19. In that regard, the Council may request the recommendation of the Finance Committee with respect to the resources to be included in the 2027–2028 budget of the Authority necessary for the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission from 1 January 2027.

## **VI. Work ahead on the Economic Planning Commission**

20. The first item of business of the Economic Planning Commission, before it could commence its substantive work, would be to formulate and submit its rules of procedure to the Council for approval. In that regard, it is noted that the Preparatory Commission prepared final draft rules of procedure for the Economic Planning Commission. While these would need to be modified to bring them into conformity with the provisions of the 1994 Agreement, they would serve as a basis for initial consideration by the Commission.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See the final draft rules of procedure of the Economic Planning Commission (LOS/PCN/WP.36/Rev.2) as contained in document [LOS/PCN/WP.52/Add.3](#).

21. Thus, the Economic Planning Commission would need to develop its workplan for the first five years of its operations. A list of possible items for consideration by the Commission in the first five years based on article 164, paragraph 2, of the Convention, as modified by the 1994 Agreement, and taking into account the work of the Preparatory Commission, is included in the annex to the present report.

## **VII. Recommendation**

22. In light of the foregoing, the Council is invited to consider adopting the draft decision set out in the annex.

## Annex

### **Draft decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* the relevant provisions of articles 151, 163 and 164 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea<sup>1</sup> and sections 1 and 7 of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982,<sup>2</sup> which address the establishment, membership and functions of the Economic Planning Commission,

*Recalling also* that the Economic Planning Commission should be operational before the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation, so as to be in a position to consider and study, in a structured and systematic way, the impacts on developing land-based producer States, with a view to minimizing their difficulties and assisting them in their economic adjustment, taking into account the work already done by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,

*Considering* that the Economic Planning Commission is composed of 15 members, to be elected every five years by the Council from among the candidates nominated by the States Parties,

*Taking note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission issued in 2022 and 2025,<sup>3</sup>

*Recognizing* the critical role of the Economic Planning Commission in supporting the work of the International Seabed Authority, particularly in relation to the potential economic impacts of activities in the Area on affected developing land-based producer States, as well as the establishment and management of the economic assistance fund,

*Recognizing also* the advanced stage of the negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and the need to ensure institutional preparedness for the transition to the exploitation phase,

1. *Decides* to operationalize the Economic Planning Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Council in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to prepare, in accordance with established procedures, the necessary arrangements for the election of the 15 members of the Economic Planning Commission by the Council at its thirty-first session, in 2026, and the appropriate arrangements for the Commission to convene from 1 January 2027;

3. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to include a provision for the Economic Planning Commission in the proposed budget of the International Seabed Authority for the financial period 2027–2028, as a separate part of the budget;

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1836, No. 31364.

<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/27/C/25](#) and [ISBA/30/C/11](#).

4. *Requests* the Finance Committee to consider the financial implications of the establishment of the Economic Planning Commission and to make appropriate recommendations to include sufficient resources in the proposed budget of the Authority for the financial period 2027–2028 to support the effective functioning of the Commission from 1 January 2027;

5. *Decides* to hold the election of the 15 members of the Economic Planning Commission at its thirty-first session, in 2026, in accordance with article 163 of the Convention, taking into account the need for equitable geographical representation, the representation of special interests and the qualifications of candidates, including at least two members from developing States whose exports of the categories of metals from minerals to be derived from the Area have a substantial bearing upon their economies;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to publish a list of members from developing States whose exports of the categories of metals from minerals to be derived from the Area have a substantial bearing upon their economies;

7. *Decides* that the first item of business of the Economic Planning Commission, prior to the commencement of its substantive work, shall be to formulate and submit its rules of procedure to the Council for approval, drawing on the draft rules prepared by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and adapted to the institutional framework of the Authority under the Agreement;

8. *Also decides* that, following the adoption of its rules of procedure, the Economic Planning Commission shall develop a detailed workplan for the first five years of its operations, based on the functions set out in article 164 of the Convention as modified by the Agreement, and taking into account the elements listed in the annex to the present decision, as well as any relevant decisions of the Council;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General, through the secretariat, to provide administrative and technical support to facilitate the operationalization of the Commission, including preparatory work in advance of the election and convening of the Commission;

10. *Decides* that the Legal and Technical Commission will continue to perform the functions of the Economic Planning Commission until the latter is convened in 2027, or until the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation, whichever occurs first;

11. *Also decides* to keep the matter under review.

## **Annex**

### **Indicative five-year workplan of the Economic Planning Commission (2027–2031)**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>References</i>
Preparation of draft rules of procedure of the Economic Planning Commission based on the final draft rules of procedure prepared by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article 163, paragraph 10, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea</li> <li>• Final draft rules of procedure of the Economic Planning Commission prepared by the Preparatory Commission</li> </ul>

*Activities**References*

Development of five-year workplan

- Article 164 of the Convention
- 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, annex, sections 1 and 7
- Work of the Preparatory Commission and work of the Legal and Technical Commission

Study of the potential impact of metal production from minerals derived from activities in the Area on the economies of developing land-based producers of those metals that are likely to be most seriously affected, with a view to minimizing their difficulties and assisting them in their economic adjustment, taking into account the work done in this regard by the Preparatory Commission

- 1994 Agreement, annex, section 1, paragraph 5 (e), and section 7
- Work of the Preparatory Commission and of the Legal and Technical Commission in performing the functions of the Economic Planning Commission

Study of the limitations affecting the ability of developing land-based producer States to eliminate the effects of seabed mineral production on their export earnings or economies and to control those effects to identify long-term remedial measures that take into account the elimination of those limitations

- 1994 Agreement, annex, section 1, paragraph 5 (e), and section 7
- Work of the Preparatory Commission and of the Legal and Technical Commission in performing the functions of the Economic Planning Commission

Review of the trends and factors affecting the supply, demand and prices of metals processed from minerals that are derived from the Area

- Article 164, paragraph 2 (b), of the Convention
- 1994 Agreement, annex, section 1, paragraph 5 (d)

Initiate a process for establishing an economic assistance fund, addressing issues such as the governance of the fund and the criteria for granting countries access to the fund

- 1994 Agreement, annex, section 7
- Work of the Preparatory Commission and of the Legal and Technical Commission in performing the functions of the Economic Planning Commission

Make recommendations on cooperation with existing global or regional development institutions with infrastructure and expertise to carry out assistance programmes

- 1994 Agreement, annex, section 7



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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 6

**Election to fill a vacancy on the Legal and Technical  
Commission in accordance with article 163, paragraph 7, of  
the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, if any**

### **Election to fill a vacancy on the Legal and Technical Commission in accordance with article 163, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

#### **Note by the Secretary-General**

1. The Council of the International Seabed Authority is invited to note that, on 4 July 2025, the Permanent Mission of Chile to the International Seabed Authority formally communicated, through a note verbale, the resignation of Andrés Camaño Moreno from the Commission. Mr. Camaño Moreno was elected on 24 August 2022 to serve a five-year term beginning on 1 January 2023 (see [ISBA/27/C/41/Add.1](#)).
2. In accordance with article 163, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and rule 80, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the Council, in the event of the death, incapacity or resignation of a member of the Commission prior to the expiration of the term of office, the Council shall elect for the remainder of the term a member from the same geographical region or area of interest.
3. Article 163, paragraph 3, of the Convention and rule 81 of the rules of procedure of the Council provide that members of the Commission shall have appropriate qualifications in the area of competence of the Commission and that States parties shall nominate candidates of the highest standards of competence and integrity with qualifications in the relevant fields so as to ensure the effective exercise of the functions of the Commission.
4. By the same note verbale, the Permanent Mission of Chile to the International Seabed Authority informed the secretariat of the Authority of the nomination of Rodrigo Miguel Urquiza Caroca, a lawyer with experience in international regulation and multilateral negotiations, as a candidate to fill the vacancy resulting from



Mr. Camaño Moreno's resignation. The curriculum vitae of Mr. Urquiza Caroca is available on the website of the Authority.<sup>1</sup>

5. The secretariat invites the Council to take a decision on the election of Mr. Urquiza Caroca to fill the current vacancy on the Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/7-July-2025-NV-from-Government-of-Chile-communicating-resignation.pdf>. The curriculum vitae is available in the language of submission only.





## Council

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 14

### Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session

## **Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* that, on 18 November 2014, the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer) entered into a contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge with the Authority,

*Recalling also* regulation 27, paragraph 2, of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area,<sup>1</sup> which refers to the schedule of relinquishments of the area allocated to contractors,

*Noting* that, according to the schedule, Ifremer was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 18 November 2022, being the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, and at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 18 November 2024, being the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract,

*Noting also* that, by a letter dated 10 May 2022 addressed to the Secretary-General, the contractor requested a one-year deferment of the relinquishment schedule to 18 November 2023 for the first relinquishment and 18 November 2025 for the second relinquishment; that, at its twenty-seventh session, the Council, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, approved the request to defer the relinquishment schedule by one year; and that, by that decision, the first relinquishment of 50 per cent of the contract area would have been due on 18 November 2023 and the second and final relinquishment of 75 per cent of the contract area on 18 November 2025,

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<sup>1</sup> ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex.



*Noting further* that, by a letter dated 18 June 2024 addressed to the Secretary-General, the contractor requested a further deferment of the schedule of the second and final relinquishment by one year, from 18 November 2025 to 18 November 2026,

*Recognizing* that the contractor has cited the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its residual impacts on the scheduling of its exploration cruises, the maintenance regime of its research vessel and the completion and operational commissioning of its autonomous underwater vehicle, inter alia, as exceptional circumstances justifying the deferment,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* that, pursuant to regulation 27, paragraph 6, of the regulations, the Council may, at the request of the contractor and on the recommendation of the Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment, and that such exceptional circumstances shall include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor,

*Considering* that the Commission has found that the reasons presented by Ifremer qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor” and has recommended deferring the schedule of the second relinquishment by one year to 18 November 2026,

*Acting upon* the recommendation of the Commission,

1. *Determines* that the reasons presented by Ifremer qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”;
2. *Defers* the schedule of the second relinquishment to 18 November 2026, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission;
3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to communicate the present decision to Ifremer.

*335th meeting  
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<sup>2</sup> ISBA/30/LTC/2, paras. 5-8.



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### Thirtieth session

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Agenda item 14

### Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session

## Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Government of Poland

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* that, on 12 February 2018, the Government of Poland entered into a contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge with the Authority,

*Recalling also* regulation 27, paragraph 2, of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area,<sup>1</sup> which refers to the schedule of relinquishments of the area allocated to contractors,

*Noting* that, according to the schedule, the Government of Poland is required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 11 February 2026, being the end of the eighth year from the date on which the contract was signed, and at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 11 February 2028, being the end of the tenth year from the date on which the contract was signed,

*Noting also* that, by a letter dated 30 April 2025, the contractor requested a two-year deferment of the first relinquishment to 11 February 2028 and of the second relinquishment to 11 February 2030 to enable it to better examine and understand its contract area and fulfil its contractual obligations,

*Recognizing* that the contractor has cited exceptional circumstances necessitating the deferment, including residual impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on its exploration activities, as well as the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine along the eastern border of Poland and its effects on the Polish economy and government priorities,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* that, pursuant to regulation 27, paragraph 6, of the regulations, the Council may, at the request of the contractor and on the recommendation of the Legal

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<sup>1</sup> ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex.

<sup>2</sup> ISBA/30/LTC/7, paras. 4–10.



and Technical Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment and that such exceptional circumstances shall include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor,

*Considering* that the Legal and Technical Commission has found that the reasons presented by the Government of Poland qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor” and has recommended deferring the schedule of the first relinquishment to 11 February 2028 and of the second relinquishment to 11 February 2030,

*Acting upon* the recommendation of the Commission,

1. *Determines* that the reasons presented by the Government of Poland qualify as “unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor”;

2. *Defers* the first relinquishment to 11 February 2028 and the second relinquishment to 11 February 2030, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to communicate the present decision to the Government of Poland.

*335th meeting  
14 July 2025*

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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 17

### Report of the Finance Committee

#### **Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority relating to financial and budgetary matters**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Taking into account* the recommendations of the Finance Committee of the International Seabed Authority,<sup>1</sup>

*Recommends* that the Assembly adopt the following draft decision:

*The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority,*

1. *Approves* the increase of the annual overhead charge for the administration and supervision of contracts for exploration to \$100,000 per contract, effective 1 January 2027;

2. *Appoints* CalvertGordon Associates as the external auditor of the Authority for the financial period 2025–2026;

3. *Decides* that, in respect of San Marino, which became a member of the Authority in 2024, the rate of assessment and the amounts of contribution to the General Administrative Fund and the Working Capital Fund shall be recommended as in paragraph 27 of the report of the Finance Committee;

4. *Recommends* that the secretariat develop the concept of the Common Heritage Fund as one of the possible ways for distribution of income from activities in the Area to be shared in accordance with articles 140, 148 and 160, paragraph (2) (g), as prescribed in article 173 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,<sup>2</sup> and that the concept should be accompanied by a comprehensive report describing and explaining the concept and detailing, inter alia:

(a) The legal rules applicable to the Fund and specifically the articles of the Convention, the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982<sup>3</sup> and the rules,

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<sup>1</sup> See [ISBA/30/A/8-ISBA/30/C/12](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1836, No. 31364.



regulations and procedures of the Authority which may regulate, limit or restrict the usage or application of the Fund's resources;

(b) An estimate of the resources necessary at the Authority for the management of the Fund consistent with the evolutionary approach;

(c) The governance structure applicable to the operation of the Fund;

(d) Whether and how the payments or contributions pursuant to article 82 of the Convention could be administered by the Fund, taking into account the interests and needs of developing States, particularly the least developed countries and landlocked countries;

5. *Appeals* to members of the Authority, including those members with contributions in arrears for the period 1998–2024, to pay outstanding contributions to the budget of the Authority as soon as possible, to enable the Authority to deliver effectively on its mandate, and requests the Secretary-General to continue her efforts to recover those arrears, including bilateral efforts;

6. *Expresses its appreciation* to the donors that have made contributions to the voluntary trust funds of the Authority, and encourages members, observers, contractors and other stakeholders to contribute financially to the trust funds;

7. *Reiterates its request* that, in the future, no reclassification decision be implemented without prior approval of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

*337th meeting  
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### Thirtieth session

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Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 16

### Report of the Secretary-General concerning the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission

## Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* the relevant provisions of articles 151, 163 and 164 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea<sup>1</sup> and sections 1 and 7 of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982,<sup>2</sup> which address the establishment, membership and functions of the Economic Planning Commission,

*Recalling also* that the Economic Planning Commission should be operational before the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation, so as to be in a position to consider and study, in a structured and systematic way, the impacts on developing land-based producer States, with a view to minimizing their difficulties and assisting them in their economic adjustment, taking into account the work already done by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority,

*Considering* that the Economic Planning Commission is composed of 15 members, to be elected every five years by the Council from among the candidates nominated by the States Parties,

*Taking note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission issued in 2022 and 2025,<sup>3</sup>

*Recognizing* the critical role of the Economic Planning Commission in supporting the work of the International Seabed Authority, particularly in relation to the potential economic impacts of activities in the Area on affected developing land-based producer States, as well as the establishment and management of the economic assistance fund,

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1836, No. 31364.

<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/27/C/25](#) and [ISBA/30/C/11](#).



*Recognizing also* the advanced stage of the negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and the need to ensure institutional preparedness for the transition to the exploitation phase,

1. *Decides* to initiate necessary steps with a view to operationalizing the Economic Planning Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Council in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a proposal for election mechanisms of the Economic Planning Commission, in consultation with the Legal and Technical Commission for technical input only, for consideration by the Council during the first part of its thirty-first session;

3. *Requests* the Finance Committee to report to the Council during the second part of its thirty-first session detailing the financial implications of the establishment of the Economic Planning Commission and provide a report on the most practical timelines for the Commission to commence its work;

4. *Decides* to keep the matter under review.

*338th meeting  
18 July 2025*

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### Thirtieth session

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Agenda item 11

**Consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations  
on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area**

### **Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on a thematic approach to the continuation of the elaboration of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation to resolve remaining key outstanding matters**

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Reaffirming* that the commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area should not be carried out in the absence of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation,

1. *Decides* to take a thematic approach for the thirty-first session of the Council towards resolving the remaining key outstanding matters in the elaboration of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea<sup>1</sup> and the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982,<sup>2</sup> with a view to setting milestones for the timely adoption of such rules, regulations and procedures;

2. *Agrees* on the following themes, encompassing the remaining key outstanding matters in the elaboration of the rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation, which require further attention and resolution by the Council:

- (a) Environmental matters;
- (b) Financial matters;
- (c) Regulatory, procedural and institutional matters;
- (d) Governance matters;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a further revised consolidated text, based on the discussions during the thirtieth session, and upload it to the website of

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol.1833, No.31363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.1836, No.31364.



the International Seabed Authority well in advance of the first meeting of the thirty-first session;

4. *Decides* to continue informal intersessional work on the basis of the working groups and Friends of the President, in advance of the thirty-first session;

5. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a draft indicative list of outstanding issues that would potentially fall under the four main themes identified in paragraph 2 above, on the basis of the discussions held in relation to the present decision and outstanding issues identified in the further revised consolidated text;

6. *Also requests* the secretariat to prepare an indicative programme of work well in advance of the thirty-first session on the basis of the draft indicative list referred in paragraph 5 above;

7. *Decides*, with a view to informing the programme of work of the thirty-first session, to examine at the beginning of that session the draft indicative list prepared by the secretariat;

8. *Also decides* to assess, at the end of the thirty-first session, the remaining work, if any, that would be needed prior to the adoption of the rules, regulations and procedures and to establish a road map to that end.

*338th meeting  
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### Thirtieth session

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Agenda item 14

### Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session

## Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* its decision [ISBA/29/C/24](#),

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission during its thirtieth session<sup>1</sup> and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2024 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission;<sup>2</sup>

2. *Expresses its appreciation* for the continued hard work, dedication and considerable achievements of the Commission, but notes with concern that some members have not participated in the thirtieth session of the Commission, and encourages support from Member States to ensure that nominated members are provided with adequate time and resources to fully participate and engage in the work of the Commission;

3. *Welcomes* the submission by contractors of their annual reports on activities carried out in 2024, and notes with appreciation that the Commission assessed 30 annual reports on the performance of contractor activities during the thirtieth session;

4. *Recalls* its decisions [ISBA/27/C/44](#) and [ISBA/29/C/24](#), welcomes the Commission identifying and naming those contractors requiring further continued attention regarding their performance and alignment with their contractual obligations and the information provided regarding each of these contractors, agrees to consider the ongoing implementation of the criteria<sup>3</sup> at its thirty-first session, specifically to

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<sup>1</sup> [ISBA/30/C/4](#) and [ISBA/30/C/4/Add.1](#).

<sup>2</sup> [ISBA/30/C/10](#).

<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/29/LTC/5](#).



ensure the timely notification of sponsoring States, and requests that any such contractors be named in the annual report of the Secretary-General, while noting that some reviews may not be completed;

5. *Welcomes* the Secretary-General's continued engagement, through the Compliance Assurance and Regulatory Management Unit of the secretariat, with individual contractors on matters raised by the Commission;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue the practice of communicating the various issues identified during the Commission's review of contractors' annual reports to the relevant contractors and sponsoring States, to follow up in writing with those contractors that repeatedly perform insufficiently or incompletely against an approved plan of work or that have indicated that the implementation of the plan of activities will be made conditional on external factors regardless of the applicable contractual requirements, to request meetings with them and to write to the respective sponsoring States to bring that issue to their attention and request a meeting with the sponsoring States to address it and to provide relevant information to the Council;

7. *Urges* the relevant sponsoring States to provide any information relating to non-compliance by their sponsored contractors and measures taken to ensure compliance under the contracts for exploration, in accordance with article 139 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;<sup>4</sup>

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Council on an annual basis the instances of alleged non-compliance and regulatory action in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982<sup>5</sup> and the regulations on prospecting and exploration, identified by the Commission, inter alia taking into account the results of the Secretary-General's consultations with contractors;

9. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to require, in accordance with section 10.3 of the standard clauses for exploration contracts, additional information from contractors at risk of non-compliance with their contractual obligations, in particular with sections 13 and 27 of the standard clauses, further requests the Secretary-General to forward that information to the Commission for its consideration, and requests the Commission to report and make appropriate recommendations to the Council during the first part of its thirty-first session on the outcome of the inquiry;

10. *Urges* the Commission, with reference to paragraph 9 above and in accordance with section 27 of the standard clauses for exploration contracts, to pay specific attention to possible non-compliance of contractors with the obligation that they, their employees, subcontractors, agents and all persons engaged in working or acting for them in the conduct of their operations under their exploration contracts shall observe the applicable law, in particular where such possible non-compliance may arise out of direct or indirect actions related to activities in the Area, including contractual obligations to act in accordance with the multilateral legal framework established by the Convention and the Agreement;

11. *Welcomes* the training programmes and opportunities offered by contractors pursuant to their contracts for exploration with the International Seabed Authority since the twenty-ninth session and the progress being made towards achieving equitable geographical distribution, with particular attention given to the interests and needs of the least developed countries and small island developing

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol.1833, No.31363.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.1836, No.31364.

States, as well as gender parity, through the selection of candidates for training opportunities;

12. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General to the Council relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission, and requests the Secretary-General to negotiate with contractors robust and comprehensive capacity-building programmes covering different aspects of deep-sea mineral exploration activities, with particular emphasis on the practical and technical elements of deep-sea mineral exploration activities, and to ensure that such programmes are needs-based, transparent and designed to facilitate the meaningful participation of developing States, including through access to data and equipment necessary for implementation of such capacity-building programmes;

13. *Welcomes* the significant progress made by the Commission in developing binding environmental threshold values, pursuant to Council decision [ISBA/27/C/42](#), and encourages the Commission to continue its work on the report and submit, after formal stakeholder consultation, its recommendations to the Council as a priority, noting that this work might further be developed as knowledge evolves;

14. *Also welcomes* the progress in developing regional environmental management plans for the Area in the north-west Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, and urges the Commission to complete this work as soon as reasonably possible;

15. *Further welcomes* the informal open dialogues with the Council, reiterates the importance of transparency in the Authority, and urges the Commission to take further steps to hold open meetings, where appropriate and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission, while maintaining its effective operation and recognizing the need to ensure the appropriate confidentiality of data and information, so as to allow for greater transparency in its work;

16. *Welcomes* the significant progress made in relation to data management at the Authority and the ongoing work of the secretariat and the Commission to this end, and requests the Secretary-General to explore options for securing the necessary resources and mobilizing support to enhance interconnection and interoperability with relevant global databases;

17. *Welcomes* the clarification by the Secretary-General of the procedures and practices, including the timing, relating to communications to members of the Authority and to the Commission regarding prospecting activities in the Area, and the comments of the Commission on the prospecting report submitted by Argeo Survey, and requests the Commission to continue to report to the Council on prospecting activities;

18. *Calls for* contributions to the voluntary trust funds to support participation in the meetings of the Authority by developing States, including in the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to report on the amount available in each fund at the start and end of each reporting period, as well as a breakdown, by trust fund, of countries that have contributed and of the countries that have received support from the funds.

*339th meeting  
21 July 2025*



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### Thirtieth session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 7–18 July 2025

Agenda item 14

### Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session

## Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans

*The Council of the International Seabed Authority,*

*Recalling* article 145 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,<sup>1</sup> which requires the Authority to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from activities in the Area,

*Recalling also* articles 162 and 165 of the Convention and section 1 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982,<sup>2</sup> which set out the functions of the Council and the Legal and Technical Commission in relation to environmental protection,

*Recognizing* the essential role of regional environmental management plans in contributing to the mandate of the Authority to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment, including through the establishment of area-based management tools and other environmental management measures,

*Recalling* its decision [ISBA/26/C/10](#) adopted at its twenty-sixth session, in which the Council, having considered the proposals on a procedure for the development, approval and review of regional environmental management plans,<sup>3</sup> and on a template with minimum requirements for regional environmental management plans,<sup>4</sup> requested the Legal and Technical Commission to develop a standardized approach, including a template with indicative elements, taking into account, as appropriate, the two proposals,

*Recalling also* the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission at its thirtieth session concerning the draft revised standardized procedure for the

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1836, No. 31364.

<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/26/C/6](#).

<sup>4</sup> [ISBA/26/C/7](#).



development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, taking into consideration the comments received during the public consultation, as contained in document [ISBA/30/C/3/Rev.1](#),

*Welcoming* the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission on technical guidance to support the practical implementation of the standardized procedure and template, as contained in document ISBA/29/LTC/8,

*Recognizing* the importance of a transparent, inclusive and science-based process for the development and review of regional environmental management plans, including the contribution of stakeholders,

*Noting* that the standardized procedure and template will need to be aligned with the draft regulations for exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, once finalized,

*Acknowledging* the need for a standardized, structured and adaptive framework to guide the development and review of regional environmental management plans in various regions of the Area, consistent with the legal framework and environmental mandate of the Authority,

1. *Adopts* the revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, as contained in document [ISBA/30/C/3/Rev.1](#);

2. *Requests* the Legal and Technical Commission and the secretariat to implement the revised standardized procedure in their future work related to the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, including by applying the template and recommendations referenced in the document;

3. *Requests* the Legal and Technical Commission to advance its work on the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, with a view to recommending to the Council new regional environmental management plans for priority areas where there are currently exploration contracts, taking into account exploration or exploitation activities and the best available scientific information;

4. *Encourages* member States, observers, contractors, sponsoring States, relevant stakeholders and competent international organizations to contribute data, knowledge and expertise to the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, in accordance with the revised standardized procedure.

*338th meeting  
18 July 2025*



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### Thirtieth session

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Agenda item 14

**Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on  
the work of the Commission at its thirtieth session**

## **Standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans**

### **I. Introduction**

1. Regional environmental management plans contribute to fulfilling the mandate of the International Seabed Authority to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from activities in the Area, in accordance with article 145 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>1</sup>
2. The purpose of a regional environmental management plan is to provide region specific information, measures and procedures. A regional environmental management plan sets overarching goals and objectives (see para. 6 below) and establishes environmental management measures, with cumulative effects taken into account.
3. As such, regional environmental management plans are designed, among other things, to:
  - (a) Provide the relevant organs of the Authority, as well as contractors and their sponsoring States, with environmental management measures and tools, including area-based management tools, to support informed decision-making for environmental protection at a regional scale from mineral resource exploration and exploitation activities;
  - (b) Provide the Authority with a clear and consistent mechanism to identify particular areas considered to be: (i) representative of the full range of habitats, biodiversity, sensitive ecosystems and biological communities within the

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<sup>1</sup> References to underwater cultural heritage were proposed for inclusion in the present document. Because the concept is still under negotiation in the Council, references were not inserted at this time. If necessary, any references to underwater cultural heritage will need to be aligned with the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area once these have been adopted.





management area; and/or (ii) important for the maintenance of the ecosystem structure and function;

(c) Provide those areas with the necessary levels of environmental protection from mineral resource exploration and exploitation activities;

(d) Provide the Authority, contractors, their sponsoring States and other member States, with information at a regional scale on the environment and on the levels of protection set out by the regional environmental management plan.

4. The process outlined below takes into consideration the functions of the Legal and Technical Commission of the Authority in relation to environmental matters. Notably, the Commission is empowered, under the Convention, to make recommendations to the Council of the Authority on the protection of the marine environment, taking into account the views of recognized experts in that field (art. 165, para. 2 (e), of the Convention) and, in the exercise of its functions, the Commission may consult with, *inter alia*, any international organizations with competence in the subject matter of such consultation (art. 163, para. 13, of the Convention). In addition, the Commission is responsible for keeping under review the rules, regulations and procedures on activities in the Area and for recommending to the Council from time to time such amendments thereto as it may deem necessary or desirable (art. 165, para. 2 (g), of the Convention).

5. The present standardized procedure document sets out the steps to be undertaken to develop, establish and review regional environmental management plans of the Authority. The standardized procedure also includes a template, which is a standardized format to be used when developing regional environmental management plans of the Authority. The template contains the minimum requirements for each future regional environmental management plan and a recommended structure with notes on content. The standardized procedure, including the template, is to be used in conjunction with the recommendations on technical guidance for the development of regional environmental management plans in support of the standardized procedure and template. These recommendations provide more detail on the sections of the regional environmental management plan as outlined in the template.

6. The following overarching environmental goal and objectives underline the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans with respect to activities in the Area.

(a) Environmental goal

The goal of regional environmental management plans is to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystem integrity at a regional scale.

(b) Environmental objectives

Environmental objectives that aid the achievement of the goal are, at a regional scale, to:

- Maintain biodiversity
- Maintain ecosystem structure, function and services (including the structure and integrity of food webs, and elemental cycling and trophic relationships)
- Maintain the representativity of habitats, communities and populations
- Maintain the ability of populations to replace themselves, including ensuring connectivity among populations
- Maintain areas of temporal, including seasonal, use (such as migratory routes and feeding grounds)

- Preserve vulnerable and/or unique ecosystems
  - Preserve endemic, endangered or threatened species
  - Maintain benthic and pelagic ecosystems, including mid-water fauna
7. Region-specific environmental objectives, if appropriate, will be developed from the above overarching goal and objectives.
8. Regional environmental management plans should contribute, whenever possible, to enhancing cooperation among relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies in the achievement of the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment.

## **II. Initiation of the regional environmental management plan development procedure**

9. The Council is responsible for the initiation of regional environmental management plans for all mineral resources in the Area where exploration and exploitation are taking place. The Council may request the Commission to develop such plans if it deems them necessary.
10. On receiving such a request from the Council, the Commission will undertake the actions described below to develop such a plan.

## **III. Development of a regional environmental management plan**

### **A. Planning**

11. The Commission should develop and review regional environmental management plans in accordance with its rules of procedure and include them in the programme of work. The programme of work will identify the main tasks to be undertaken, with an indicative timeline. This information should be made available in the reports of the Chair of the Commission.

### **B. Compilation of available data and information**

12. The Commission, with assistance from the secretariat, should ensure that it has access to all available data. These data include:
- (a) Contractor data and information submitted to the Authority that pertain to the region, in accordance with the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority;<sup>2</sup>
  - (b) Data and information, in particular from scientific projects, initiatives in the region, peer-reviewed articles and publicly accessible databases;
  - (c) Traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and any other relevant information on underwater cultural heritage;

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<sup>2</sup> Confidential data and information to be used in accordance with regulation 36 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area, regulation 38 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area, and regulation 38 of regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area.

(d) Any other information relevant to the indicative elements for the regional environmental management plan, including other types of marine uses.

13. Such data and information will be disseminated through the regional environmental characterization and the data report, as detailed in the recommendations. Both documents will be made available on the website of the Authority.

## **C. Scientific assessment**

14. Experts should be brought together, including through workshops, and selected by the Commission on the basis of an expert and stakeholder mapping exercise, in accordance with the recommendations. For science-focused workshops, the criteria for the selection of experts include:

(a) Scientific knowledge and research experience in the region concerned, ideally with authorship of peer-reviewed reports and publications on deep-sea biology, oceanography, geology, technology and environmental impact assessments related to deep-sea mineral resources;

(b) Access to relevant environmental data, including biological, physical and chemical oceanography, and geological data in the region concerned;

(c) Experience and expertise relating to the spatial planning and scientific design of area-based management tools, such as marine protected areas, as well as non-spatial management measures;

(d) Stakeholders and persons with expertise in, and relevant data for, the area concerned, including traditional knowledge, and representatives of other resource users and coastal States.

15. The convening of experts should be focused on data synthesis and the development of scientific tools and approaches as guided by the Commission. The following objectives will be addressed:

(a) Define the geographical scope of the appropriate regional environmental management plan area, drawing upon information on the geology, biogeography and oceanography of the region and cultural and traditional knowledge, if applicable;

(b) Review, synthesise and analyse environmental data for benthic and pelagic ecosystems, including oceanographic, physiochemical, geological and biological data;

(c) Describe mineral resources and current mineral exploration and/or exploitation activity;

(d) Identify other users and area-based management tools established by competent bodies;

(e) Evaluate effects, including cumulative effects, at the regional scale;

(f) Provide descriptions of areas that could be protected from exploration and exploitation in order to achieve the effective protection of the marine environment, including through the identification and description of different categories of area-based management tools, where appropriate;

(g) Identify potential non-spatial management measures or options;

(h) Identify knowledge gaps and propose options to address them.

15 bis. Reports on the workshops will reflect any diverging opinions presented by participants at the workshops in order to bring them to the attention of the Commission.

#### **D. Management assessment**

16. The results of the scientific assessment will provide inputs for additional expert deliberations focused on translating the scientific assessment into management measures and implementation strategies.

17. Experts will be selected by the Commission on the basis of an expert and stakeholder mapping exercise, in accordance with the recommendations. For management-focused workshops, the criteria for the selection of experts include:

(a) Experience and expertise relating to spatial planning and scientific design of area-based management tools, such as marine protected areas, as well as non-spatial management measures, and environmental knowledge of the region concerned, ideally with authorship of peer-reviewed reports and publications;

(b) Understanding of the Authority's rules, regulations and procedures related to environmental management;

(c) Expertise in competent bodies and in rules, regulations and procedures related to environmental management, including representatives of relevant intergovernmental bodies, where feasible;

(d) Expertise in cumulative or combination impacts and regional-scale environmental assessments;

(e) Stakeholders and persons with expertise in, or knowledge of, the region concerned, including traditional knowledge, and representatives of other resource users and coastal member States.

18. The management-oriented expert deliberations will focus on identifying:

(a) Region-specific objectives to achieve the overarching environmental goals and objectives;

(b) Area-based and other types of management measures to achieve the goals and objectives;

(c) Priorities and a strategy for environmental research and monitoring at the regional scale to assess the effectiveness of the regional environmental management plan, including addressing the information and knowledge gaps identified;

(d) Implementation strategies, including collaboration and cooperation.

#### **E. First draft of the regional environmental management plan**

19. The Commission, with assistance from the secretariat, will prepare a draft regional environmental management plan on the basis of available data, the results of the deliberations and other relevant considerations. The content of the regional environmental management plan should follow the template and structure in the annex to the present document.

## **F. State and stakeholder consultation**

20. The secretariat will notify States and make the draft regional environmental management plan publicly available for a minimum of 90 days by placement on the website of the Authority, for the submission of comments by interested parties within this time frame. The regional environmental characterization and the data report will also be made publicly available to support consultation with States and stakeholders.

21. The secretariat will publish any comments received from States and stakeholders on the website of the Authority.

## **IV. Establishment of a regional environmental management plan**

### **A. Recommendations by the Commission**

22. After the closure of the formal State and stakeholder consultation, i.e. after a minimum of 90 days, the Commission must, at its subsequent regular meeting, revise as appropriate the draft regional environmental management plan, taking into account the comments received during the State and stakeholder consultation and any further relevant information. Key elements of the comments and how the Commission addressed them will be explained.

23. The Commission may recommend that the Council adopt the draft regional environmental management plan. The draft regional environmental management plan and the recommendation should be made publicly accessible on the website of the Authority for a minimum of 90 days in advance of the Council meeting during which the plan will be put forward for adoption.

### **B. Approval of the regional environmental management plan**

24. The Council is responsible for the adoption of the regional environmental management plan for the particular region concerned before the Commission considers an application for a plan of work for exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

25. The Council may approve the draft regional environmental management plan or request the Commission to make specific revisions to the plan and/or undertake further work in developing or verifying its content, for consideration at a later meeting of the Council.

26. When the Council approves the regional environmental management plan, it will be implemented by the Authority as set out in the plan.

## **V. Review of the regional environmental management plan**

27. Each regional environmental management plan should undergo a review, at the latest every five years after its adoption by the Council, or earlier if suggested by the Commission or requested by the Council. This review will be based, *inter alia*, on newly available data and scientific information and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures established to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan:

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<sup>3</sup> This refers to conditions that are applicable to the exploitation phase, for which the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area are still under negotiation. This reference will therefore need to be aligned once the regulations have been adopted.

28. Events that may lead the Commission to conduct, or the Council to request, an earlier review may include:

- (a) Availability of substantial new environmental knowledge or data for the region;
- (b) Issuance of an emergency order that relates to a site within the region;
- (c) Request by another organ of the Authority;
- (d) A major environmental change in or affecting the region (e.g. a natural or anthropogenic disaster);
- (e) Submission of an application for a new plan of work for a new category of mineral resource in the region.

29. As part of the review of the regional environmental management plan, the Commission will provide to the Council a report that summarizes how new data and information have been considered by the Commission. The report should be made publicly accessible by the secretariat. The Commission may recommend to the Council any updates needed to the plan.

30. The review process follows paragraphs 12, 13 and 20–26 above and, as appropriate, paragraphs 14–19. The extent to which each step in paragraphs 14–19 is performed may be altered as appropriate in proportion to the changes required. Prior to the commencement of the review process, the Commission will decide which steps in those paragraphs are to be performed as part of the review. This decision will be reviewed in light of the input from the stakeholder consultation on the draft revised regional environmental management plan.

31. The Council may decide on the outcome of the review based on the recommendations of the Commission.

## Annex

### Template

#### I. Introduction and background

This section sets the scene for the regional environmental management plan, providing the background to the plan in enough detail for a reader to form an overall impression of the scope of the plan.

It should include a short description of the regional environmental management plan, including its overarching environmental goals and objectives, policy, legal and administrative context, a summary of scientific and management expert deliberations and the data report and regional environmental characterization produced, the region covered by the plan and the mineral resources under consideration in the plan.

#### II. Goals and objectives

Environmental goals and objectives<sup>1</sup> underlie the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans in contributing to the mandate of the International Seabed Authority to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from activities in the Area, in accordance with article 145 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

This section of the template contains the overarching environmental goal and objectives that should be reproduced as drafted for each regional environmental management plan, as set out in paragraph 6 of the standardized procedure:

(a) Environmental goal

The goal of regional environmental management plans is to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystem integrity at a regional scale.

(b) Environmental objectives

Environmental objectives that aid the achievement of the goal are, at a regional scale, to:

- Maintain biodiversity
- Maintain ecosystem structure, function and services (including the structure and integrity of food webs, and elemental cycling and trophic relationships)
- Maintain the representativity of habitats, communities and populations
- Maintain the ability of populations to replace themselves, including ensuring connectivity among populations
- Maintain areas of temporal, including seasonal, use (such as migratory routes and feeding grounds)
- Preserve vulnerable and/or unique ecosystems
- Preserve endemic, endangered or threatened species

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<sup>1</sup> Here, a goal is considered to be a statement of general direction or intent. Goals are high-level statements of the desired outcomes to be achieved. An objective is considered to be a specific statement of desired outcomes that represent the achievement of a goal.

- Maintain benthic and pelagic ecosystems, including mid-water fauna

Region-specific objectives, if appropriate, will be developed from the above overarching environmental goal and objectives. Such region-specific objectives include environmental, cultural and social economic objectives, where applicable.<sup>2</sup>

### III. Geographical scope

This section should include information on the geographical scope of the area covered under the regional environmental management plan.

3.1 Describe the data and information used for developing the definition of the region, including the rationale. This will include summarizing the main data on bathymetry, geomorphology, biogeography and oceanography.

3.2 Provide the geographical coordinates and water depths of the regional environmental management plan region.

3.3 Provide a map that shows:

- Boundaries of the regional environmental management plan in the Area;
- Contract areas and reserved areas.

### IV. Regional setting

This section should include a summary of the information compiled in the regional environmental characterization and the data report, without repeating detailed information already presented in those background reports.

This section will be supported by maps and geographic information system files, including available information on the categories shown below.

#### 4.1. Environmental characteristics

This section summarizes the main characteristics and current management status of the marine environment. It includes descriptions of environmental baseline data and results of data analyses in the region, gathered through the scientific evidence covered in section III of the standardized procedure, and outlined further in the recommendations on technical guidance for the development of regional environmental management plans in support of the standardized procedure and template.

##### 4.1.1 Physiochemical characteristics

This section will cover the main characteristics of meteorology and air quality, physical oceanography and chemical oceanography.

##### 4.1.2 Geological characteristics

This section will include a description of the key geological, geomorphological and topographic structure and seabed substrate characteristics.

##### 4.1.3 Biological characteristics

This section includes information on the pelagic and benthic biological and ecological characteristics of ecosystems in the region and ecosystem linkages.

<sup>2</sup> This section may need to be revisited once the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area are finalized.



#### 4.1.4 Natural stressors

This section should include details of any regional-scale natural stressors (e.g. volcanic activity) or naturally occurring extreme events (e.g. underwater landslides).

### 4.2. Information on human activities in the region

#### 4.2.1 Mineral resource-related activities

Details of mineral resource-related activities should be described. These activities include seabed mineral exploration and exploitation contracts, applications received for approvals of plans of work and other spatial information from contracted areas such as preservation reference zones and impact reference zones in the region.

#### 4.2.2 Other human activities

This section should cover other legitimate marine uses in the region (such as cable installation and operation, fishing and marine scientific research).

#### 4.2.3 Other anthropogenic stressors

Other anthropogenic stressors not described in the preceding sections should be listed and described for the region. Examples include, but are not limited to, climate change (including ocean acidification), pollution, dump sites and illegitimate use of the region (e.g. illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and piracy).

#### 4.2.4 Cultural heritage and interests

Details should be provided here of any cultural heritage and interests in the region (e.g. shipwrecks, fossils, human remains, navigation routes and features used by Indigenous Peoples and local communities).

### 4.3. Description of knowledge gaps

While data gaps and uncertainties are described in the regional environment characterization (and also under some of the headings above), it is recommended that a separate summary be included here of the main information gaps and uncertainties (due to data quality or quantity) with regard to environmental information.

### 4.4. Designations and management systems

This section should include identified descriptions, designations, management systems or standards established by global and regional intergovernmental bodies or agreements, such as:

- Area-based and/or non-spatial management measures adopted by relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global and regional intergovernmental bodies in the region;
- Identified areas of potential or particular ecological interest (e.g. ecologically or biologically significant marine areas or key biodiversity areas).

## V. Management measures

This section should include area-based management tools and other management measures to be applied at the regional scale (as well as at the scale of contract areas, if appropriate), based on the management-oriented deliberations of section III of the standardized procedure, the recommendations and the goals and objectives in section II of this template and section I of the standardized procedure).

This will include descriptions of key elements and analyses carried out in formulating management measures (such as an environmental risk assessment or cumulative effects assessment), as well as the management outcomes for the area-based management tools as defined in the recommendations.

### **5.1. Area-based management**

This section describes details of area-based management tools, including those set out below.

5.1.1 Location, coordinates and size of areas and sites of particular environmental interest and other area-based management tools. In addition to descriptive text, maps should be provided.

5.1.2 Reasons for the designation of each area or site of particular environmental interest.

5.1.3 Management measures imposed on mineral resource-related activities by the Authority for each specific area-based management tool.

### **5.2. Non-spatial management**

This section includes any management measures that are not solely area-based. These may include aspects such as requirements for equipment or operations.

5.2.1 Temporal management

This section comprises details of any temporal, including seasonal, measures that should be applied to seabed mineral activities (e.g. to take into account the migration of marine mammals and other megafaunas).

5.2.2 Other management measures, if any.

## **VI. Regional monitoring**

In this section, the strategy for regional research and monitoring is described. This should include:

- A description of the main knowledge gaps in the design of the regional environmental management plan, and priorities identified for environmental research and/or monitoring that will address these gaps;
- Measures for monitoring the state of the environment and/or potential changes in a specific region that can be used to evaluate whether regional management measures are performing effectively in meeting management objectives.

This section provides a description of what is needed for regional monitoring from a scientific and technical perspective, taking into account the overarching goal and objectives of the regional environmental management plan. The implementation of regional monitoring will depend on regional circumstances and available resources. Member States and stakeholders are encouraged to cooperate through the Authority to support regional research and monitoring.

### **6.1. Knowledge gaps and research priorities**

This section should identify the key knowledge gaps in the implementation of the regional environmental management plan and provide information about the priorities for future research to address these knowledge gaps.

**6.2. Strategy for regional environmental monitoring**

This section should describe measures for monitoring the state of the environment and/or potential changes in a specific region. It will include:

- (a) Identification of monitoring objectives;
- (b) Future research plans covering survey/sampling areas, sampling methodologies and data analyses, to address current data gaps;
- (c) Integration of information from all relevant sources, such as contractors, scientific literature, DeepData, global databases and other relevant information;
- (d) Measures to incentivize marine scientific research through international cooperation;
- (e) Options for collaboration with and between contractors.

**6.3. Other aspects**

This section should include:

- (a) Measures for capacity-building and training;
- (b) A communication and public information strategy.

**VII. Review of progress in the implementation of the regional environmental management plan**

A regional environmental management plan is not static. It will be reviewed by the Commission, at the latest every five years, focusing on the key elements of the plan, including the environmental setting, the management measures and the knowledge gaps and implementation strategy. The review will be undertaken to determine its suitability or need for amendment. This should include an evaluation of the status of the marine environment in the region, the impact of activities and the relevance and effectiveness of the proposed measures to achieve the goals and objectives, based on the best available data and information and in alignment with the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority.

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