



## Council

Advance Unedited Version  
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English only

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### Thirty-first session

Council session, part I  
Kingston, 9–20 March 2026

## Statement of the President on the work of the Council of the International Seabed Authority during the first part of the thirty-first session

### I. Opening of the session

1. At the 340<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council, on 9 March 2026, the President for the thirtieth session, Duncan Muhumuza Laki (Uganda), opened the first part of the thirty-first session. The Council met from 9 to 20 March 2026. Friday, 20 March 2026, was an official holiday (Eid al-Fitr) observed by the ISA ([ISBA/ST/IC/2025/8](#)).

### II. Adoption of the agenda

2. At the 340<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 9 March 2026, the Council took up agenda item 2 and adopted the agenda for its thirty-first session ([ISBA/31/C/1](#)).

### III. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Council

3. At its 340<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 9 March 2026, the Council took up agenda item 3 and elected by acclamation Mayank Joshi (India) as President of the Council for its thirty-first session.

4. At the same meeting, under agenda item 4, the Council elected Costa Rica (Latin American and Caribbean States), Italy (Western European and other States) and South Africa (African States) as Vice-Presidents.

### IV. Report of the Secretary-General on the credentials of members of the Council

5. At the 352<sup>nd</sup> meeting, on 18 March 2026, under agenda item 5, the Secretary-General presented the report on credentials. Credentials were received from 33 members of the Council, and notes verbales from three members of the Council for the purpose of accreditation.

## V. Status of the contracts for exploration and related matters

6. At the 347<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 16 March 2026, the Council took up agenda item 7 and considered and took note of a 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/31/C/3](#)).

## VI. Consideration, with a view to approval, of applications for extension of a contract for exploration

7. At its 352<sup>nd</sup> meeting, on 18 March 2026, the Council took up agenda item 10 and considered the report and recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission relating to the following applications for an extension of the contracts for exploration: Interoceanmetal Joint Organization ([ISBA/31/C/5](#)); JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya ([ISBA/31/C/6](#)); Government of the Republic of Korea ([ISBA/31/C/7](#)); China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association ([ISBA/31/C/8](#)); Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd ([ISBA/31/C/9](#)), and Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer ([ISBA/31/C/10](#)). At the same meeting, the Council, acting on the recommendations of the Commission, approved all applications for extensions for the above-mentioned six contracts.<sup>1</sup>

## VII. Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area

8. At its 340<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 9 March 2026, the Council took up agenda item 11, consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area (“Draft Regulations”). All subsequent discussions on the Draft Regulations were open to participation by members of the Authority and observers.

9. At the same meeting, pursuant to Council decision [ISBA/30/C/18](#), paragraph 3, the Secretary-General presented the Further Revised Consolidated Text of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area ([ISBA/31/C/CRP.1/Rev.2](#)) and its briefing note.<sup>2</sup>

10. Additionally, at the same meeting, pursuant to Council decision [ISBA/30/C/18](#), paragraph 5, the Secretary-General presented the indicative list of outstanding issues ([ISBA/31/C/CRP.4](#)). During the 340<sup>th</sup> and the 341<sup>st</sup> meetings, on 9 March 2026, the Council examined that indicative list of outstanding issues.

11. At its 341<sup>st</sup> meeting, on 9 March 2026, the Friends of the President group facilitated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, discussed the issue of **Prevention of Corruption**. Delegations generally agreed with the proposed structure for draft regulation 40. Some delegations stressed the need for a more general policy to cover internal matters of corruption or conflict of interest within the Authority itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Interoceanmetal Joint Organization ([ISBA/31/C/12](#)); JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya ([ISBA/31/C/13](#)); Government of the Republic of Korea ([ISBA/31/C/14](#)); China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association ([ISBA/31/C/15](#)); Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd ([ISBA/31/C/16](#)), and Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer ([ISBA/31/C/17](#)).

<sup>2</sup> [https://isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Briefing-note-on-the-Further-Revised-Consolidated-Text-of-the-draft-Regulations-on-Exploitation-of-Mineral-resources-in-the-Area\\_v.24022026.pdf](https://isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Briefing-note-on-the-Further-Revised-Consolidated-Text-of-the-draft-Regulations-on-Exploitation-of-Mineral-resources-in-the-Area_v.24022026.pdf)

12. At the same meeting, the Friends of the President group on **the Non-Compliance Notice, Suspension, and Termination of Exploitation Contract**, facilitated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, held discussions structured around four focus questions. On the first question, concerning the general comments on the revised text, a number of delegations expressed general support for the revised framework on compliance and enforcement. On the second question, related to draft regulations 103 to 103 quat., delegations emphasized the importance of the need for consistent application of the compliance strategy, with some delegations calling for further consideration of parent company liability. Support was expressed for the principle that enforcement measures be proportionate to the nature of non-compliance. Delegations also emphasized the need to clarify (i) the respective roles of the Compliance Committee and the Council, and (ii) the relationship with the Legal and Technical Commission, particularly with regard to emergency orders. On the last two focus questions, delegations supported the continuation of intersessional work and the inclusion of draft regulations 104 and 105 within the scope of the group, with a view to advancing draft regulations 103 to 103 quat. in a coherent manner.

13. In the morning of 10 March 2026, the Friends of the President group on **Seabed Mining Register** (draft regulation 92), facilitated by India, held an informal meeting. Comments received focused especially on which type of information should be included therein. Delegations also highlighted the need to protect the confidentiality of sensitive information.

14. In the morning of 10 March 2026, the Friends of the President group on **Environmental Goals and Objectives**, facilitated by Germany, held an informal meeting to discuss Draft Regulation 44 ter. Germany recalled that the text on environmental goals and objectives had originally been included in draft regulation 13 and was subsequently moved into a standalone regulation to avoid overloading that regulation. Germany further noted that the topic was not new, referencing the Legal and Technical Commission's recognition in 2019 of the importance of developing environmental goals and objectives to support the development of standards, guidelines and regional environmental management plans. A number of delegations expressed support for retaining the environmental goals and objectives within the regulations for the time being, particularly in the absence of a general environmental policy adopted by the Authority. Several delegations suggested that strategic environmental goals should be addressed in a separate instrument applicable to both exploration and exploitation, and that the level of detail in the current text would be more appropriately placed in a standard.

15. Additionally, in the same morning, the Informal Working Group on **Reference to regional environmental management plans (REMPs)**, facilitated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, held an informal meeting. Several delegations supported the proposal presented by the facilitator, and expressed flexibility for working on its basis. Delegations further highlighted the crucial role of the regional environmental management plans and expressed support for further work of refinement to be conducted intersessionally.

16. In the afternoon of 10 March 2026, the Friends of the President group on **Submarine Cable Protection**, facilitated by Singapore, held an informal meeting. The first part of the discussion focused on the two alternative versions of draft regulation 31. While the original version entrusts identification of other relevant activities to the contractor, the alternative one envisages an active role of the Authority in this regard. Both approaches received some support. Some delegations suggested to merge them, so that the contractor would have a central role in identifying other relevant activities in the marine environment, assisted however by the Authority. The second part of the discussion focused on draft regulation 31bis on

“Reducing risk of damage to submarine cables and pipelines”. Delegations expressed support for the structure of the regulation. Some delegations suggested that further details on how to implement the obligations set out in this regulation might be included in a guideline.

17. Additionally, in the same afternoon of 10 March 2026, the Friends of the President group on the **Environmental Compensation Fund** (draft regulations 54 to 56), facilitated by Mexico held an informal meeting. Delegations stressed the need to establish it in full compliance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Some delegations considered that, as a matter of procedure, the establishment of the Fund should not be provided in the Regulations but rather in a draft decision. Furthermore, it was suggested that several details are not yet specified in the current text, such as the trustees and beneficiaries of the Fund, and that it might not be appropriate to include those details in a Standard.

18. Also, in the same afternoon, the informal working group on **Environmental Management and Monitoring**, facilitated by Norway, met in an informal setting. The group focused on streamlining the relevant draft regulations. Council members considered issues such as the frequency with which environmental data from deep-sea mining activities should be submitted. Several delegates supported proposals requiring contractors to engage an independent auditor to conduct performance assessments of their Environmental Management and Monitoring Plans (EMMPs).

19. In an informal meeting on 11 March 2026, the Council analysed the **financial system** with the support of the presentation by the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining (IGF), on the updated fiscal model of the “System of Payment for the Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area”. Delegations consistently raised three key issues: (i) the specific obligations applicable to the Enterprise, with reference to Annex IV of the Convention; (ii) the manner in which environmental externalities should be addressed, i.e., whether through a separate draft regulation or by means of a subsequent review of the payment system mechanism following the adoption of the Draft Regulations; and (iii) the determination of the operative date triggering certain financial obligations, with proposals focusing in particular on whether this should be linked to the commencement of commercial production or to the commencement of Exploitation activities.

20. During the same informal meeting on 11 March 2026, the Informal Working Group on the **Equalization Measure**, facilitated by Australia, held discussions on the draft regulation 64bis, with broad support for its inclusion and for its application from the commencement of commercial production, while some delegations emphasized the need to maintain reference to exemptions of the Enterprise consistent with article 10 of Annex IV to the Convention. .

21. Additionally, during the same informal meeting on 11 March 2026 and at the 343<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Council on 12 March 2026, the Friends of the President group on **Payment Mechanism and Review of Payment Mechanism** (draft regulations 81 and 82), facilitated by Canada, met. There was broad support for retaining the definition of “system of payment” contained under paragraph 1 alt. of draft regulation 81. However, no consensus was reached regarding the organ that should be responsible for making recommendations to the Council on adjustments to, or the introduction of, a new system of payment.

22. At its 342<sup>nd</sup> meeting on 11 March 2026, further discussions were held in relation to the financial regulations. Delegations acknowledged the general consensus on including the mechanism of **profit share on the transfer of rights** under draft regulation 65. Regarding the **financial incentives** (draft regulation 63), the Council recognized continuing divergence on the scope and limits of incentives, despite

several delegations having expressed support for retaining the reference to the Financial Incentives Registry. As to draft regulations 64 ter and quat. on the topic of **environmental externalities**, some delegations supported their inclusion to ensure consideration of environmental costs; however, several delegations reserved their position, given further work is needed on methodology, clarity, and potential consolidation on the environmental costs royalties' mechanism.

23. At its 343<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 12 March 2026, the Council discussed the outstanding issue of **Monopolization** (draft regulations 23 and 107, and Schedule). Several delegations expressed support for addressing this issue at the stage of evaluating an application for a plan of work, while also recognizing that the current definition of monopolization in the Schedule remains unresolved. Given the lack of consensus on the overall topic, the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago volunteered to lead a Friends of the President's group to facilitate the discussion, including to develop agreeable language and a more precise definition.

24. At its 344<sup>th</sup> meeting on 12 March 2026, the Council continued its discussions on **Test Mining and Pilot Mining** (draft regulation 48 ter). The co-facilitators of the informal working group - Belgium, Germany and China - reported on intersessional work, noting that divergent views remained that warranted further exchange. They recalled their joint proposal introducing a two-phase approach, consisting of test mining followed by pilot mining. It was noted that whilst exemptions from pilot mining were not considered advisable given its role as the final step before commercial production, there appeared to be a general understanding that some exemptions from test mining could be acceptable, particularly where proven technologies and robust pre-existing data exist. Several delegations noted that exemptions should be available where a contractor had already conducted equivalent testing using the same equipment in similar environmental conditions. On monitoring, the co-facilitators emphasised that both test and pilot mining must be accompanied by monitoring before, during and after each phase. Delegations expressed broad support for the two-phase approach as a means of ensuring robust environmental safeguards, whilst calling for greater clarity on the definitions, purposes, and scales of each phase.

25. At the same meeting, the informal working group on **Underwater Cultural Heritage**, co-facilitated by Brazil, Greece and the Federated States of Micronesia. Delegations considered the alternative text proposed by the working group for draft regulation 35, and expressed support for proceeding on its basis. Support was also expressed for the continuation of intersessional work of the group, to further consider issues that require additional discussion, such as references to cultural rights and interests, the proposed establishment of an advisory group of experts, and the reference to venerated sites in the Regulations.

26. At its 345<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 13 March 2026, and in an informal meeting in the afternoon of 17 March 2026, the Informal Working Group on the **Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) mechanism**, facilitated by Norway, held discussions structured around two focus areas. On the first focus area, there was broad support among delegations for establishing the Compliance Committee through a Council decision, with a strong majority favouring adoption prior to, or at least simultaneously with, the exploitation regulations. On the second focus area, concerning draft Regulation 95 bis, delegations offered views on five outstanding issues: the scope of the Committee's mandate, with many supporting coverage of both exploration and exploitation activities; the placement of powers and functions, with most favouring a complementary approach between the Council decision and the regulations; the interface with the Legal and Technical Commission, where delegations stressed the need to avoid overlapping mandates; emergency orders,

where views were divided between those supporting the Committee's authority to act provisionally and those cautioning that this falls within the mandate of the Commission under the Convention; and Chief Inspector accountability, where a majority supported the Chief Inspector reporting to the Compliance Committee.

27. In addition to the informal working group on the Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) Mechanism, the Council held discussions on the **overarching inspection mechanism** at its 346<sup>th</sup> meeting on 13 March 2026 and at an informal meeting in the afternoon of 16 March 2026, focusing on draft regulations 96 to 97. There was broad support for retaining the core structure of the mechanism and for clarifying the roles and procedures associated with inspections. However, delegations expressed differing views regarding the appointment and accountability of the Chief Inspector. On the execution of inspections, many delegations supported the inclusion of both announced and unannounced inspections, with certain flexibility for inspections to be conducted on-site, remotely or virtually. In respect of the nomination of the inspectors, broad support was noted for the mechanism by which States Parties could nominate inspectors, without the possibility of self-nomination. Overall, delegations noted that alignment is needed across these draft regulations and the ones relating to the compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

28. In the morning of 17 March 2026, the Informal Working Group on **Closure Plan**, facilitated by Fiji, held an informal meeting on 4 guiding questions and draft regulations 59 to 61. Many delegations supported the recommencement of work in the group and the recent revision of the regulations. Several delegations supported and underlined the necessity to closely align this group work with the work in the informal working group on the Environmental Management and Monitoring.

29. At its 349<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 17 March 2026, the Informal working Group on **Rights and Interests of Coastal States**, co-facilitated by Portugal and Singapore, conducted the discussion of this outstanding issue. The co-facilitators proposed six guiding questions for consideration of the Council, namely: 1) Who should be consulted? Several delegations expressed support for the language “potentially affected Coastal States”, while others preferred “adjacent Coastal States”; 2) When consultations should take place? Most delegations suggested that they should take place before the applicant submits a plan of work for exploitation; 3) Who should initiate the consultations? Most delegations agreed that consultations should be carried out with the assistance of the Secretariat; 4) What matters should be covered by consultations? Delegations expressed support for the list currently provided in draft regulation 93bis; 5) Where consultation rules should be placed within the regulatory framework? Most delegations agreed that the right to consultation should be included in the Regulations, but expressed flexibility to including elements of detail in the Standards; and 6) What is the position of delegations on newly proposed draft regulation 4bis (“Without prejudice”)? Most delegations supported the wording proposed, although some of them considered that it should be more cross-cutting and should not only affect consultation.

30. At the same meeting, the Friends of the President group on **modification of a plan of work** (draft regulation 57), facilitated by the United Kingdom, met. Most delegations expressed support for the proposal submitted by the group, and provided suggestions aimed at refining the drafting and improving the clarity of the text.

31. At its 350<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 17 March 2026 and at its 352<sup>nd</sup> meeting, on 18 March 2026, the Council took up the **Annexes** to the draft regulations. On a general level, many delegations welcomed the resumption of the reading of the annexes. Several delegations highlighted the need for harmonization between the draft regulations and the Annexes. The President suggested that the Secretariat will prepare a revision of the Annexes ahead of the second part of the thirty-first session of the Council, based

on the input provided during the first part and written submissions that the delegations will provide during the intersessional period. Specifically, on 17 March 2026, the Council managed to conduct a reading of Annexes I and II. There seemed to be broad support for the structure of the annexes and specific suggestions for refinement were provided.

32. At its 351<sup>st</sup> meeting, on 18 March 2026, the President of the Council conducted negotiations on two conceptual topics: 1) **Conditions for beginning exploitation in the Area** (draft regulation 2(3)). Some delegations suggested that paragraph 3 should be better placed in a general policy of the Authority or in a draft decision in the Council. Others however supported its inclusion within the Regulations. A number of textual proposals were submitted, which will be considered by the Kingdom of the Netherlands as proponent of this version of the paragraph in order to provide a revised language. 2) **Definitions of “Incident” and “Notifiable Event”** (Schedule). It was highlighted that they are separate events that need to be treated differently. Germany offered to provide a streamlined version of the definitions intersessionally.

33. At its 352<sup>nd</sup> meeting, on 18 March 2026, the Council took up on two additional outstanding issues: 1) **Treatment of the Enterprise** (draft regulation 19 and Schedule). Delegations acknowledged the detailed paper presented by the Interim Director-General of the Enterprise and by the United Kingdom. Delegations seemed to agree with the approach proposed in the paper, and in particular with the first alternative proposed for the definition of “Contractor” in the Schedule, which will therefore inform the future work on this matter. 2) **Parent Company Liability** (draft regulations 23, paragraph 5(d), 24, Annex XI and Schedule). Delegations supported the proposal submitted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include in the Regulations a Parent Company Liability Statement. Some delegations expressed some concern as regards the particular situation of State owned companies and of the Enterprise. It was also suggested that the Parent Company Liability Statement should be considered a precondition for the approval of a plan of work, and that consequences of failure to comply with it should be further coordinated with draft regulation 103.

34. At its 353<sup>rd</sup> meeting, on 19 March 2026, the Council conducted negotiations on two outstanding issues: 1) **Resources covered by the Regulations**. Several delegations expressed support for maintaining a general approach in the Regulations, consistent with their role as a general framework, while the provisions of Standards and Guidelines should be more precise and therefore resource specific. Most delegations supporting this position suggested that priority should be given to the development of Standards and Guidelines on polymetallic nodules. Other delegations suggested however that the Regulations should solely apply to polymetallic nodules. 2) **Confidential Information and procedures to ensure confidentiality** (draft regulations 89 to 91), delegations appeared to agree on the general structure of these draft regulations, despite some suggestions to restructure parts of them. Comments to refine the language were mainly received.

35. Due to time constraints, the Council did not carry out a discussion of the two remaining outstanding issues: **Review of the Regulations** and **Whistleblowing procedures**. Upon request of the facilitator, also the discussion on **Effective Control** was deferred to the second part of the session.

#### **Development of Standards and Guidelines**

36. Regarding the Standard and Guidelines, Council is reminded to take into consideration the note of the Secretariat of 2018 on the content and development of standards and guidelines for activities in the Area under the Authority’s regulatory

framework,<sup>3</sup> the Decision of the Council in 2019,<sup>4</sup> the recommendations in 2019 by the Legal and Technical Commission for their development for the implementation of the draft Exploitation Regulations, following the report of the workshop held in Pretoria<sup>5</sup> from 13 to 15 May 2019 and [ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1](#), section IV.A and Annex, the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its twenty-sixth session, regarding development of standards and guidelines,<sup>6</sup> and its subsequent addenda,<sup>7</sup> as well as the decision of the Council of 2021<sup>8</sup> and the report in 2022 of the Chair of the Commission summarizing stakeholder feedback on the phase 1 draft standards and guidelines.<sup>9</sup>

37. The Commission recommended that the standards shall be adopted by the Council, be applied provisionally pending approval by the Assembly and be legally binding on member States, contractors and the Authority. The guidelines are recommendatory in nature and may be issued by either the Commission or the Secretary-General. The guidelines will be submitted to the Council, which may require their amendment or withdrawal.

38. The Legal and Technical Commission further recommended, and the Council has endorsed, an outcome-based approach to regulations for the development of standards and guidelines, in particular in connection with environmental regulations, drawing on existing best practices in regulatory frameworks for other industries, such as the offshore oil and gas industry. An outcome-based approach provides for rigorous and contractually binding outcomes, while affording flexibility in the processes used to achieve those outcomes. The Commission highlighted the importance of reviewing the standards and guidelines periodically, in the light of developments in knowledge and improved technology.

39. The Commission also recommended the adoption of the following three-phase approach to the development of standards and guidelines:

- a) Phase 1: Standards and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place **by the time of adoption** of the Draft Regulations on exploitation. This phase includes standards and guidelines that would be required to guide the initial consideration and development of an application of a plan of work for exploitation.
- b) Phase 2: Standards and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place **before the receipt of an application** of a plan of work for exploitation.
- c) Phase 3: Standards and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place **before commercial mining** activities commence in the Area.

40. Regarding the placement and hierarchy of the respective standards and guidelines, a proposal has been put forward in [Annex-I -placement-hierarchy-criteria-.pdf](#).

41. At its 354<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 19 March 2026, under item 11, the Council addressed the way forward for the second part of the session, including the development of standards and guidelines. Divergent views were expressed, with some delegations favouring the decoupling of standards and guidelines from the draft regulations, while others emphasized their interrelated nature and the need for parallel development. The Council acknowledged the important role of the Legal and Technical Commission

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<sup>3</sup> [ISBA/25/C/3](#)

<sup>4</sup> [ISBA/25/C/37](#), paragraphs 3 to 5.

<sup>5</sup> [pretoria\\_workshop\\_report-final.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ISBA/26/C/12](#)

<sup>7</sup> [ISBA/26/C/12/Add.1](#) and [ISBA/26/C/12/Add.2](#)

<sup>8</sup> [ISBA/26/C/57](#)

<sup>9</sup> [ISBA/27/C/2](#)

in advancing this work and welcomed its continued efforts to update and consolidate the list of standards and guidelines, particularly those envisaged for Phase one.

42. At the end of the discussion, the Council endorsed the proposal by the President to request the Commission:

- a) to take up the current list of Standards and Guidelines;
- b) to prepare an updated and consolidated version, including merging specific Standards and / or Guidelines, where appropriate;
- c) to revise the list of Standards and Guidelines that should be ready by the time of the adoption of the Regulations;
- d) to identify those standards and guidelines that are already prepared and that may require revision in light of the current state of negotiations; and
- e) to develop a timeline or roadmap and recommendations on the development of Standards and Guidelines by the Commission to be reported before the Council meetings in July 2026.

#### **Review of the progress on the Draft Regulations**

43. At its 354<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 19 March 2026, the President noted the great advancement of the negotiations of the text, and stressed the need for ensuring that all the hard work that has been put into these negotiations during these weeks – to the extent possible - is consolidated in the present version of the Further Revised Consolidated Text as an updated consolidated text following the first part. In this regard, the Council endorsed the proposal of the President that this revision 3 of the Further Revised Consolidated Text would include:

- a) textual proposals received from the intersessional working groups and the Friends of the President groups, building on what has been advanced during this first part of the thirty-first session and during the intersessional work between March and July 2026;
- b) clear indications in the Further Revised Consolidated Text on wherever updates have been made since the second revision of the Further Revised Consolidated Text; and
- c) the revised Annexes.

44. It was stressed that this would not be a Further Further Revised Consolidated Text, but simply an implementation of what has been achieved during these weeks and in the intersessional period before July 2026.

45. The President invites facilitators of the groups to deliver their textual proposal to the Secretariat, through the Council email, no later than **15 June 2026**. On that basis, the President requests the Secretariat to compile the textual proposals by the groups in order to issue a revision 3 of the Further Revised Consolidated Text by 19 June 2026, which would be the basis for discussion during the second part of the thirty-first session of the Council.

#### **Agreement on necessary intersessional work**

46. During the same meetings, the President highlighted that intersessional work is a decisive element for the success of process in relation to the advancement of the Further Revised Consolidated Text. The President complimented the facilitators and delegations for the intersessional work and strongly encouraged all facilitators and delegations to make full use of the intersessional period ahead of the Council meeting in July 2026. The President highlighted that progress that can be made between

sessions, through dialogue, through the exchange of written proposals, and through informal consultations, is invaluable.

47. In that regard, the Council endorsed the request of the President to all facilitators of the Informal Working Groups and the Friends of the President groups that their textual proposals, should take into account:

1. the negotiations held during this first part of the thirty-first session;
2. any written submissions received thereafter; and
3. indication of whether the issue is still to be considered an outstanding issue.

48. The President also requested the Secretariat to:

- a) distribute a list of the informal working groups and friends of the President, and
- b) upload on the Authority's website a living calendar with all the online meetings and associated documents.

49. Furthermore, the Council endorsed the request by the President to the Secretariat to prepare and circulate an updated list of outstanding issues ahead of the second part of the thirty-first session, reflecting:

- a) the progress achieved;
- b) the areas requiring further consideration; and
- c) to include a priority section identifying cross-cutting and thematic issues that require political guidance from the Council.

## **VIII. Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirty-first session**

50. At its 347<sup>th</sup> and 348<sup>th</sup> meetings, on 16 March 2026, the Council considered agenda item 13, during which 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 thirty-first session ([ISBA/31/C/4](#)).

51. Delegations congratulated Sissel Eriksen (Norway) on her election as Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission, and Edwin Egede (Nigeria) as Vice-Chair. Delegations also expressed appreciation to the former Chair, Erasmo Lara Cabrera, for his leadership and contributions. Participants commended the Commission for its extensive work during the session and acknowledged the high level of participation of its members.

52. Participants expressed appreciation for the breadth and technical quality of the Commission's work, including its contributions to the development of the regulatory framework for exploitation activities, environmental management tools and standards and guidelines. Several delegations highlighted the importance of the work of the Commission on regional environmental management plans, considered key tools for the protection of the marine environment, noting progress made in the development of plans for different regions. Several delegations also welcomed the progress made by the Group of Experts on environmental thresholds, requested to proceed expeditiously, and emphasized that the future process for public consultations should be conducted in an open, transparent, and inclusive manner. The work of expert groups and the advancement of technical inputs to support a robust and science-based regulatory framework were also welcomed. The importance of timely access to environmental baseline data collected by contractors and the strengthening of the scientific basis for decision-making were also highlighted.

53. Several delegations emphasized the importance of training and capacity-building programmes. While noting progress, including improvements in gender balance in training opportunities, some delegations underscored the need to enhance equitable geographical distribution, particularly for developing countries and underrepresented regions. Several delegations praised the Women in Deep Sea Research initiative and the SHE Mentorship Program. A sponsoring State announced upcoming training programs. The importance of strengthening outreach, transparency and access to training opportunities, as well as promoting broader participation of scientists and institutions from developing States, was highlighted.

54. A number of delegations commented on the Commission's consideration of applications for extension of contracts for exploration. In this regard, emphasis was placed on the need for consistency, objectivity and non-discrimination in the application of the criteria set out in Council decision ISBA/21/C/19. Several delegations stressed that extensions should be granted only where contractors have fulfilled their obligations and demonstrated good faith efforts to advance their programs of activities. A group of States recalled that relinquishment provisions remain an important mechanism for ensuring equitable access to seabed resources and encouraged continued monitoring of their implementation. The group noted that relinquished areas should be managed in a manner that facilitates their potential future allocation to developing states.

55. The importance of periodic reviews of plans of work as a tool for effective oversight and accountability was also underscored and to continue efforts in enhanced transparency in the outcomes of those periodic reviews. Some delegations stressed that the evaluation of the activities of contractors must remain rigorous, science based, transparent and aligned with the precautionary approach.

56. Several delegations welcomed the intersessional work that the Commission will conduct regarding the development of standards and guidelines on the exploitation regulations and the importance of its work in reviewing and mapping to support its timely completion according to the three-phase outcome oriented approach, particularly to phase one. Some delegations emphasized that the Council should provide required guidance to the Commission regarding their development, and the potential selection of experts for this task to be conducted in a transparent process.

57. At its 348th meeting, the Council took note of the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirty-first session.

*Preliminary considerations on Council decision [ISBA/30/C/19](#).*

58. At its 348<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 16 March 2026, under agenda item 13, the Council considered and took note of the Report of the Legal and Technical Commission on the implementation of the Council's decision relating to a request for additional information from contractors at risk of non-compliance with their contractual obligations ([ISBA/31/C/4/Add.1](#)).

59. Delegations urged all contractors to fulfil their contract obligations and conduct activities within the multilateral framework. Some delegations addressed issues relating to sponsoring State obligations and the identification of potential cases of non-compliance. Some delegations urged contractors to provide requested information promptly and satisfactorily.

60. Delegations underscored the importance of transparency in the methodology applied by the Commission, including with regard to the identification of contractors requiring additional attention. Some delegations welcomed the rigour of the work of

the Commission. Clarifications were sought concerning the criteria used, the evidentiary basis for such determinations and the distinction between different categories of contractors referenced in the report. Some delegations also emphasized the need for greater clarity regarding the process followed by the Commission, including whether contractors concerned had been consulted prior to being identified, and how additional information requested by the Commission would be reflected in the assessment of contractors' performance.

61. Several delegations reaffirmed their commitment to fulfilling their obligations under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, including in their capacity as sponsoring States. In this context, they highlighted the establishment of national regulatory frameworks to ensure effective control over sponsored contractors and compliance with the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority. The importance of transparency in contractor ownership structures and in any changes affecting control or financial status was also noted.

## **IX. Operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission.**

62. At its 348<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 16 March 2026, the Council considered and took note of the Report of the Secretary-General on election mechanisms of the members of the Economic Planning Commission ([ISBA/31/C/11](#)).

63. At the same meeting, the Council also considered the draft decision of the Council on the election and establishment of the Economic Planning Commission, annexed at the report of the Secretary-General ([ISBA/31/C/11, Annex](#)). As some delegations suggested amendments to the text, the President invited delegations to send proposals to be included in a revised draft decision circulated by the Secretariat. The consideration of the draft decision will continue during the second part of the thirty-first session of the Council.

## **X. Engagement and cooperation with bodies and processes under the BBNJ Agreement.**

64. At its 348<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 16 March 2026, and 350<sup>th</sup>, on 17 March 2026, under agenda item 19, the Council considered and took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the potential implications and opportunities for the work of the International Seabed Authority of the operation 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 ([ISBA/31/C/2/Rev.1](#)).

65. At the same meetings, the Council considered the draft decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on engagement with bodies and processes under 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, annexed to the report of the Secretary-General ([ISBA/31/C/2/Rev.1, Annex](#)). At the 350<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 17 March 2026, the debate on the draft decision was adjourned until the second part of the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Council in July 2026.