



**PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATION OF  
BELGIUM TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
SEABED AUTHORITY**

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**VERBAL NOTE**

The Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of Belgium to the International Seabed Authority presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the International Seabed Authority and has the honour to refer to Note No. ISA/OLA/2026/176, dated 22 April 2026, inviting Member States to **submit relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures relating to deep seabed mining for consideration at the second part of the thirty-first session of the Council in July 2026.**

In response to this invitation, Belgium is pleased to **provide the following information on its national legislative framework governing prospection, exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources of the seabed and ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.**

Belgium has **maintained a national legislative framework on deep seabed mining since 2013.** Following a thorough review of the legal and regulatory landscape and in light of evolving international standards and scientific understanding, this framework was comprehensively revised and replaced by the Law of 25 May 2024 on the Protection of People and the Environment in the Prospection, Exploration and Exploitation of the Resources of the Seabed and Ocean Floor and its Subsoil beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction<sup>1</sup>, hereinafter referred to as the "2024 Law".

**The 2024 Law fully supersedes the Law of 17 August 2013**, which first established Belgium's sponsorship and licensing regime for deep seabed mining activities. The revision was prompted by significant developments in the international context – including the continued negotiation of the Mining Code within the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the growing prospect of a transition from exploration to commercial exploitation, and heightened awareness of the environmental stakes involved.

**The 2024 Law constitutes Belgium's primary national instrument** in this domain and is fully compatible with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI thereof, both of which Belgium has ratified. It establishes a comprehensive regulatory regime covering all phases of activity – prospection, exploration and exploitation – beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

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<sup>1</sup> *Loi du 25 mai 2024 relative à la protection de l'homme et de l'environnement lors de la prospection, de l'exploration et de l'exploitation des richesses du fond et du sous-sol des mers et océans au-delà des limites de la juridiction nationale* ([FR](#)) ([NL](#))



- The **Law codifies Belgium’s cautious stance, reflecting the position taken by Belgium within the ISA Council**. Exploitation activities may only be sponsored if the international Mining Code has been adopted with adequate environmental objectives, sufficient scientific knowledge of ecosystem impacts is available, and commitments under other international frameworks – in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity and the BBNJ Agreement – are not undermined.
- The Law establishes **the conditions under which the Belgian State may grant sponsorship certificates** to natural or legal persons of Belgian nationality or registered in Belgium, authorising them to carry out activities in the Area under ISA-issued contracts. The competent authority for issuing such certificates is the Ministry of Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment<sup>2</sup>, through its Marine Environment Service.
- The Law **introduces strict environmental requirements as a precondition for the granting or renewal of any sponsorship certificate**. Applicants must demonstrate that planned activities will not cause serious harm to the marine environment and must provide robust environmental impact assessments, monitoring plans and contingency measures. Where these standards cannot be met, Belgium will not issue a sponsorship certificate.
- The **Law clarifies the scope of the sponsoring State’s due diligence obligations** in line with the 2011 Advisory Opinion of the Seabed Disputes Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. It introduces provisions on the liability of contractors and on Belgium’s potential responsibility as a sponsoring State, thereby aligning national law with international obligations.
- The Law provides for **the integration of environmental externalities into the financial model** applicable to contractors, consistent with Belgium’s position within the ISA that environmental costs should be internalised to the greatest extent possible in any future exploitation project.

The Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of Belgium avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the International Seabed Authority the assurances of its highest consideration.



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<sup>2</sup> Service public fédéral Santé publique, Sécurité de la Chaîne alimentaire et Environnement ([Website](#)).