



## Finance Committee

Distr.: General  
13 May 2026

Original: English

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### Thirty-first session

Kingston, 7–10 July 2026

Item 13 of the provisional agenda\*

### Financial implications of establishing the Economic Planning Commission

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### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to decision [ISBA/30/C/17](#) of 18 July 2025 of the Council of the International Seabed Authority 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 (1994 Agreement). In that decision, the Council requested 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.

2. Additionally, pursuant to the same decision, the secretariat prepared a proposal for the 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. The Council continues consultations regarding a draft decision on the election mechanisms, and it is expected to continue its consideration during the second part of the thirty-first session.

#### II. Legal and institutional context

3. 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 section 1 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. These provisions address the establishment, membership and functions of the Commission.

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\* [ISBA/31/FC/L.1](#).



4. Under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the Economic Planning Commission is intended to make recommendations to the Council on matters within its competence, including issues of economic planning, financial implications of activities in the Area and policies relevant to the implementation of the regime for those activities.

5. The functions envisaged for the Economic Planning Commission are distinct from, and complementary to, those entrusted to other organs of the Authority. In particular:

(a) The Council retains its decision-making authority under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement;

(b) The Legal and Technical Commission exercises technical and environmental advisory functions;

(c) The Finance Committee provides advice on administrative and budgetary matters pursuant to section 9 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement;

(d) The Enterprise, once operationalized, shall carry out activities in the Area in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

6. In that context, the Secretary-General, in two previous reports ([ISBA/27/C/25](#) and [ISBA/30/C/11](#)), provided an update on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission, including its financial implications and an indicative five-year workplan of the Commission, which the Council adopted as noted above (see [ISBA/30/C/17](#)).

7. The operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission must therefore be undertaken in a manner that preserves the institutional balance established by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, avoids duplication of mandates and ensures clarity in the respective advisory roles of the subsidiary organs of the Council.

### **III. Indicative budget for establishing the Economic Planning Commission for the financial period 2027–2028**

8. It is estimated that the Economic Planning Commission will commence its mandate on 1 January of the year following that in which the Council elects the members of the Commission (see [ISBA/31/LTC/4](#)). The indicative timeline for the implementation of the Commission, as presented in annex I, suggests that it will commence its mandate on 1 January 2028. An indicative budget of \$959,000 for the establishment of the Commission in the financial period 2027–2028 is presented in annex II. The indicative budget makes provisions for secretariat support costs (three staff posts: one of Director, one of Policy Officer and one of Administrative Assistant), for non-post costs related to Commission meetings during Authority sessions, for technical and analytical studies and for costs related to outreach and inter-organ coordination.

9. The post of Director is budgeted at the D-1 level, while the post of Policy Officer is budgeted at the P-4 level. The post of Administrative Assistant is budgeted at the GS-6 level, which is the normal budget policy for all General Service posts within the secretariat, regardless of individual post classification.

10. Non-post costs include provision for costs for two meetings of one week each during Authority sessions, for consultants that will provide analytical support for the work of the Commission, for travel related to Commission experts participating in meetings and for costs related to the submission of Commission reports.

11. The indicative budget does not include provision for defraying the travel costs of members of the Economic Planning Commission from developing States to attend the annual sessions of the Authority. In accordance with regulation 5.5 of the Financial Regulations of the International Seabed Authority, a dedicated trust fund for this purpose may be established by the Secretary-General and reported to the Finance Committee. Such a fund would be financed through voluntary contributions and would not constitute a charge on assessed contributions of member States.

#### **IV. Practical timelines for the implementation of the Economic Planning Commission**

12. In examining the most practical timelines for the commencement of the work of the Economic Planning Commission, the legal framework of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the decision of the Council of 18 July 2025 and the budgetary cycles of the Authority must be considered.

13. The commencement of the work of the Commission is contingent upon:

(a) The adoption by the Council of the necessary election mechanisms of its members (see [ISBA/30/C/17](#));

(b) The election of members in accordance with those mechanisms;

(c) The provision of adequate budgetary resources within the approved programme budget;

(d) The availability of appropriate secretariat support.

14. The timing of elections will directly affect the effective date of commencement of the Commission's mandate. Should elections not be held in 2026, and in the absence of further Council meetings held for that purpose during the thirty-first session, the members of the Commission would formally assume their functions at the beginning of 2028.

15. This could create an interim period between the Council's decision to operationalize the Commission and the formal assumption of functions by its members.

16. If such an interim period arises, preparatory work may be undertaken by the secretariat within existing resources, without prejudicing the workplan of the Commission once constituted. Such preparatory activities could include baseline economic analysis, the compilation of relevant data and the identification of priority issues for initial consideration.

17. The International Seabed Authority operates on a biennial programme budget approved by the Assembly of the Authority. The introduction of a new subsidiary organ requires the integration of anticipated costs within the relevant budget cycle. A phased introduction of activities during the first biennium of operation may further support prudent financial management and allow the Council to assess the evolving scope of the Commission's work.

18. An indicative phased work plan and implementation timeline is provided in annex I. The sequencing set out therein is intended solely for planning purposes and does not prejudice decisions of the Council regarding institutional arrangements, scope of work or scheduling.

19. The amounts set out in annex II are indicative and scenario-based. Actual financial implications will depend on decisions of the Council regarding membership, meeting frequency, scope of work and the secretariat support structure and will be

subject to approval within the Authority's biennial programme budget by the Assembly.

## **V. Conclusion**

20. The Finance Committee is invited to provide in its report its assessment of the financial implications of the establishment of the Economic Planning Commission and of the most practical timelines for the Commission to commence its work.

## Annex I

### Indicative practical timeline for the implementation of the Economic Planning Commission

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Activity/procedural step</i>	<i>Lead entity</i>	<i>Indicative output</i>	<i>Indicative timeline/year</i>
Phase I: legal and institutional preparations	Adoption of election mechanisms for membership of the Commission	Council of the International Seabed Authority	Council decision on election mechanisms (ISBA/30/C/17)	2026
	Preparation and issuance of invitation to member States to submit nominations	Secretariat of the Authority (on behalf of the Council)	Circular note inviting nominations	2026
	Integration of Commission-related requirements within programme budget planning	Secretariat	Budget inputs for consideration by the Assembly of the Authority	2026
	Preparation of background administrative and legal documentation	Secretariat	Supporting documentation for process implementation	2026
Phase II: membership and structuring	Receipt of nominations from member States	Secretariat	Compilation of nominations	2026–2027
	Circulation of list of candidates and statements of qualifications	Secretariat	Consolidated list of candidates	2026–2027
	Election of members of the Commission	Council	Council decision appointing Commission members	2027
	Establishment of administrative support arrangements within the secretariat	Secretariat	Assigned support structure	2027
Phase III: inaugural activities and work programme	Preparatory administrative arrangements prior to commencement of activities	Secretariat	Operational readiness (logistics and documentation)	2027
	Convening of inaugural session of the Commission (following commencement date)	Secretariat and Commission	Inaugural meeting	2028
	Adoption of rules of procedure	Commission	Agreed procedural framework	2028

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Activity/procedural step</i>	<i>Lead entity</i>	<i>Indicative output</i>	<i>Indicative timeline/year</i>
	Development of five-year workplan	Commission	Agreed procedural framework	2028
	Identification of initial areas for advisory consideration	Commission	Initial work programme (indicative)	2028
Phase IV: integration and advisory functions	Provision of advisory inputs on economic and financial matters, as requested by the Council	Commission	Commission output for consideration by the Council	2028 onward
	Coordination and exchange of information with other subsidiary organs, as appropriate	Commission and secretariat	Coordinated inputs across organs	2028 onward
	Preparation of analytical materials, where required	Commission (with secretariat support)	Background analytical documentation	2028 onward
Phase V: consolidation and review	Submission of periodic reports to the Council and, as appropriate, the Assembly	Commission	Periodic reports	2028 onward
	Participation in inter-organ exchanges, where appropriate	Commission and other organs	Coordinated recommendations	2028 onward
	Review of workload, working methods and resource requirements	Commission and Council	Adjusted working arrangements, if required	2028 onward, with biennial review

*Note:* The years shown are indicative and assume that election mechanisms are adopted in 2026, membership is completed in 2027 and the Commission begins substantive activities in 2028. The sequence remains subject to decisions of the Council and relevant budgetary approvals.

## Annex II

### Indicative budget for the Economic Planning Commission for the financial period 2027–2028

(United States dollars)

<i>Budget line</i>	<i>Proposed 2027</i>	<i>Proposed 2028</i>	<i>Total, 2027–2028</i>
Salaries and common staff costs	–	674 000	674 000
Session costs	–	100 000	100 000
Consultants	–	150 000	150 000
Travel	–	20 000	20 000
Submission of Commission reports	–	15 000	15 000
<b>Total</b>	–	<b>959 000</b>	<b>959 000</b>