



218th Session of Interministerial Commission

for Maritime Affairs, CIRM, of Brazil

Remarks by Leticia Carvalho, Madam Secretary-General

International Seabed Authority

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Mr. Secretary of CIRM, Rear Admiral Robledo de Lemos Costa e Sá,

Mr. Commander of the Navy, Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen,

Members of the Interministerial Commission for Marine Affairs,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the invitation to participate in this 218th Ordinary Session of the CIRM.

It is an honour to be able to address this Commission, which plays a central role in coordinating Brazilian policy for marine resources and in articulating an integrated vision of Brazil's presence in the oceans.

I speak today with profound institutional respect and with a very special personal feeling.

As a Brazilian and as Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, it is very significant to be able to engage with this Commission on an agenda that unites the Law of the Sea, science, environmental protection, the South Atlantic, critical minerals, international cooperation, and the Common Heritage of Humanity.

The official mission to Brazil and recognition of the Brazilian authorities.

Allow me to first express my gratitude to the Brazilian Government and to the institutions that welcomed me during my mission in April and May 2026.

I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Brazilian Navy, SECIRM, and the ministries and institutions represented on this Commission for their openness to dialogue and the quality of the discussions held.

In April, I had the honor of participating in the IX Ministerial Meeting of ZOPACAS in Rio de Janeiro, a forum of great importance for cooperation, peace, and governance in the South Atlantic.

In May, I undertook an institutional mission in Brasília and Rio de Janeiro, with meetings in different ministries, the Federal Senate, in scientific institutions, and with the new generation of Brazilian diplomats.

These meetings confirmed the importance of the relationship between Brazil and ISA.

They also demonstrated that the international governance of the seabed is a cross-cutting agenda, involving foreign policy, defense, science, technology, environment, mining, fishing, blue economy, data, capacity building, and multilateral cooperation.

It is precisely because of this cross-cutting nature that CIRM and SECIRM play such a relevant role in supporting an integrated Brazilian reflection on the Area, the South Atlantic and Brazil's participation in the international governance of the deep seabed.

Mission Statement

As a result of these conversations, I have prepared a Mission Statement and Strategic Reflections, which I respectfully submit to the consideration of the CIRM members.

The Statement brings together, in an integrated manner, the main themes discussed during the mission to Brazil and presents elements for reflection for a new phase of dialogue between Brazil and the ISA.

The document values Brazil's historical contribution to the Law of the Sea, to multilateralism, and to the consolidation of the principle of the Common Heritage of Humankind.

It also highlights opportunities for cooperation in areas such as ocean science, data, capacity building, environmental protection, the South Atlantic, critical minerals, public auditing, PROAREA, and Brazilian participation in ISA's work.

The document identifies possible ways to strengthen Brazil's presence in the international governance of the Area, in full compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the principle of the Common Heritage of Humankind, and the priorities sovereignly defined by Brazil.

Brazil and the Common Heritage of Humanity

I would like to begin with the historical dimension.

Brazil has played a relevant role in the construction of the legal regime of the oceans.

Brazil has always been a respected voice in the defense of multilateralism, the peaceful use of the oceans, international cooperation, equity, and the interests of developing countries.

The principle of the **Common Heritage of Humankind**, which is at the heart of the ISA's mandate, is part of this history.

This principle establishes that the mineral resources of the Area — the seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction — should be managed for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

Brazil helped build this vision.

Therefore, Brazilian participation in the current stage of the ISA is not something new or external to the country's tradition.

It is a natural continuation of its own historical contribution to the Law of the Sea.

The central message is about governance

During my mission to Brazil, I tried to convey a central message: the main issue at this moment is **governance**.

The ISA should not be understood only as an organization linked to mining.

The ISA is an international governance institution created by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement.

It is part of the ISA mandate to organize, regulate, and control activities in the Area, on behalf of the States Parties and for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

The central question is not just whether or not there will be mining activity in the future.

The central question is: what rules, what environmental limits, what scientific standards, what monitoring mechanisms, what transparency instruments, what benefit-sharing mechanisms, and what forms of inspection will guide any future decision?

That's the reason why ISA's governance architecture, including the Mining Code, is so important.

Completing this architecture means strengthening environmental protection, legal certainty, transparency, science, the equitable sharing of benefits, and the concrete implementation of the Common Heritage of Humankind.

ZOPACAS, South Atlantic and the role of Brazil

The South Atlantic is a strategic region for Brazil and for the coastal States of Latin America and Africa.

It is a space of peace, cooperation, maritime security, trade routes, submarine cables, energy, biodiversity, science, blue economy and international importance.

ISA's presence in ZOPACAS has reinforced that the governance of the Area is also of interest to the countries of the South Atlantic.

Although the Area is beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, the decisions taken in the ISA are relevant to all States Parties.

On the sidelines of ZOPACAS, I spoke with Brazilian authorities, including the Ministry of Defense, the Navy Command, SECIRM, and DHN (Hydrography and Navigation Directorate).

I also held meetings with delegations from South Atlantic countries, including Argentina, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Namibia, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

These conversations demonstrated that the countries of the South Atlantic are interested in greater capacity building, greater participation, and a greater understanding of the Area's governance.

Brazil, due to its regional leadership, its diplomatic tradition, and its vision of the South Atlantic as a space of peace and cooperation, can play a very important role in this relationship between the ISA and ZOPACAS.

Results from the meetings held in Brasília and Rio de Janeiro

In May, I had the pleasure to deepen this dialogue with several Brazilian authorities.

With the **Ministry of Defense** and the **Brazilian Navy**, we discussed the South Atlantic as a strategic area, always within a peaceful, cooperative vision based on international law.

With **SECIRM**, we discussed the importance of interministerial coordination for an agenda that involves marine resources, science, the environment, maritime security, critical minerals, and international governance.

With **DHN**, we addressed the importance of data, hydrography, oceanography, and knowledge of the seabed for evidence-based decisions.

With the **Ministry of the Environment**, we discussed marine environmental protection, the precautionary principle, science, data, and robust environmental standards.

With the **Ministry of Mines and Energy**, we discussed critical minerals, energy transition, production chains, value aggregation, PROAREA, and the interface between Brazilian mineral policy and the multilateral governance of the Area.

With the **Ministries of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Agriculture**, we discussed blue economy, fishing, communities that depend on the sea, food security, and the need to treat the ocean as an integrated system.

With the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, we discussed Brazil's historical role, multilateralism, the equitable sharing of benefits, and the importance of an active Brazilian participation in ISA debates.

In the **Federal Senate**, especially in the Committee for Foreign Affairs and National Defense, we addressed the interface between foreign policy, strategic minerals, South Atlantic, ocean science, and international governance of the Area.

At the **Brazilian Academy of Sciences**, I highlighted the role of science, data, and scientific cooperation in deep-sea governance.

At the **Rio Branco Institute**, I spoke with young diplomats about the role of the ISA as one of the frontiers of 21st-century multilateral diplomacy.

What Brazil can do for the ISA and for the governance of the Area

Allow me now to highlight, with all due respect, some ways in which Brazil can contribute to the ISA and to the international governance of the Area.

First, Brazil can strengthen its participation in ISA meetings, with an increasingly strategic, technical and influential presence.

Second, Brazil can contribute to the completion of the ISA governance architecture, including the Mining Code, environmental standards and guidelines, monitoring mechanisms, transparency instruments, data systems, inspection, benefit sharing and capacity building.

Third, Brazil can help ensure that environmental protection, science, precaution, and equity are at the center of any future decisions.

Fourth, Brazil can contribute with its scientific, environmental, mineral, maritime, and diplomatic expertise.

Fifth, Brazil can bring the South Atlantic countries closer to the ISA agenda, including through ZOPACAS.

Sixth, Brazil can strengthen its national coordination in the Area through CIRM and SECIRM, coordinating the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Science, Technology and Innovation, Environment, Mines and Energy, Navy, fisheries, universities, SGB/CPRM and research institutions.

Seventh, Brazil may consider, at an opportune moment and by sovereign decision, a more structured presence in the Area, including through the strengthening of PROAREA and a scientific agenda dedicated to the South and Equatorial Atlantic.

This contribution from Brazil would be very valuable to the ISA, because it would bring to the process the perspective of a country with environmental authority, scientific capacity, mining expertise, diplomatic tradition, and leadership in the Global South.

What the ISA can do for Brazil

The ISA can help Brazil in many ways too.

It can provide technical and institutional information on the Area's regime, on the Mining Code, on exploration contracts, on environmental standards, and the responsibilities of sponsoring States.

It can support capacity-building programs for Brazilian specialists, including diplomats, scientists, government technicians, young professionals, and institutions related to the marine resources' agenda.

It can also facilitate access to and use of data platforms, such as **DeepData**, and promote cooperation in science, environmental data, marine geology, biodiversity, monitoring, and impact assessment.

It can support closer ties between Brazilian institutions and international deep-sea research networks.

It can work with Brazil on initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in science, such as the **S.H.E. — See Her Exceed** programme.

It can support reflections on PROAREA, on a possible Brazilian scientific agenda for the South and Equatorial Atlantic, and on the legal, technical, and environmental conditions of a potential formal Brazilian presence in the Area, should the Brazilian Government wish to evaluate this path.

The ISA can also cooperate with Brazil on issues related to governance, transparency and public auditing, including through dialogue with the TCU (Brazilian Federal Court of Accounts) and the WGEI/INTOSAI (World Organization for Energy and Social Security/Institute for Strategic Studies and Innovation) on auditing extractive industries.

Critical minerals, Bill nº 2.780/2024 and Legal-Technical Note

One of the institutional outcomes of the mission is related to the Brazilian debate on critical and strategic minerals.

During discussions in the Federal Senate, especially in the context of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense, the processing of Bill No. 2,780/2024, which establishes the National Policy on Critical and Strategic Minerals, was discussed

This debate is relevant because critical minerals are linked to the energy transition, the digital industry, low-carbon technologies, defense, security of supply, and technological autonomy.

Therefore, a Legal-Technical Note was prepared on the possible inclusion of mineral resources from the international seabed Area within the scope of this national policy.

This Note is offered as a technical, respectful and non-prescriptive contribution.

The central legal message is clear: the Area is not Brazilian territory, and its resources are not subject to national sovereignty or jurisdiction.

But Brazil can develop scientific, technological, industrial, environmental, and diplomatic capabilities related to this agenda.

Including this dimension in Brazilian policy could strengthen research, capacity building, processing, traceability, certification, security of supply, and Brazilian participation in multilateral governance.

Public auditing, TCU/WGEI and governance of mineral resources

Another important development was the invitation received by ISA to participate in the meeting of the Working Group on Auditing of Extractive Industries (WGEI), organized in Brasilia with the support of the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU).

This invitation opens a new avenue for dialogue between ISA, Brazil, and the international public audit community.

Public auditing is increasingly relevant to the good governance of natural resources.

In the case of the Area, the Supreme Audit Institutions do not audit the ISA, but they can assess how governments are preparing to fulfill national responsibilities related to the international deep-seabed regime.

This includes legal frameworks, inter-ministerial coordination, risk assessment, transparency, use of public resources, oversight of sponsored entities, environmental protection, and compliance with international obligations.

This dialogue with the TCU/WGEI reinforces an important message: the governance of the Area also requires accountability, evidence, transparency, controls, and institutional preparedness.

PROAREA, science and renewed Brazilian presence

Brazil already has an important institutional basis for reflecting on its presence in the Area: PROAREA.

PROAREA was conceived to identify and evaluate areas of potential interest for mineral resources in oceanic regions beyond national jurisdiction.

This experience could be updated and strengthened in a new phase, with an emphasis on science, data, biodiversity, marine geology, technology, environmental monitoring, capacity building, and international governance.

A dedicated line to the South and Equatorial Atlantic could allow Brazil to transform strategic interest into knowledge, knowledge into national capacity, and national capacity into constructive influence in the ISA.

The Note also mentions that Brazil could evaluate, at an opportune moment and by sovereign decision, a new formal presence in the Area, including through a possible exploration contract with the ISA.

This point deserves clarification: an exploration contract is not an authorization for commercial exploitation.

It is a platform for research, data, environmental assessment, capacity building, geological knowledge, and diplomatic participation in the governance of the Area.

Any decision in this regard will be the sole responsibility of the Brazilian Government.

ISA remains available to provide technical support for this reflection, should Brazil wish to pursue it further.

Final Message

Allow me to conclude with a message of trust and partnership.

The ISA sees Brazil as a natural partner.

Brazil helped build the legal framework for the sea and consolidate the principle of the Common Heritage of Humankind.

Now, Brazil can help complete the governance of the Area.

This governance must be guided by science, environmental protection, equity, legal certainty, benefit sharing, transparency, capacity building, and a true multilateral spirit.

For Brazil, being present in this process means defending its principles, strengthening its strategic vision for the South Atlantic, and contributing to ensuring that the mineral resources of the international deep seabed are governed for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

Brazil can be a voice of balance: a voice capable of uniting environmental protection, science, development, critical minerals, distributive justice, and multilateralism.

The ISA is ready to continue this dialogue with Brazil, with SECIRM, with CIRM, with the Navy, with Itamaraty, and with all Brazilian institutions interested in this agenda.

Thank you very much.