

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*



## **Third-Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS**

### **Agenda Item 9: Information Reported by the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority**

**Statement by Madam Leticia Carvalho**

**Secretary-General, ISA**

*New York, 15 June 2026*

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for me to address the States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the second time in my capacity as Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority.

Please allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties. It will be a pleasure and an honour for all of us to work under your guidance.

I take this opportunity to renew my congratulations and my appreciation to Ambassador Mayank Joshi on his election and leadership as President

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

of the Council. Your guidance during the first part of the thirty-first session of the Council of the Authority has proven invaluable, and I look forward to welcoming you again in Kingston in the coming weeks.

I also take this opportunity to appreciate Ambassador Dwight Gardiner for his presidency and leadership during the thirtieth session of the Assembly.

I further wish to extend my appreciation to the States Parties, for your constant support for the work of the Authority since its very establishment, and for your sincere commitment to upholding multilateralism and the rule of law, which find one of their highest

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

expressions in the principle of the common heritage of humankind governing the work of the Authority.

## **The Convention as a cornerstone in multilateralism and threats to its tenure**

Mr President, as of today the Convention has 172 Parties, comprising 171 States and the European Union. I take this opportunity to congratulate Kyrgyzstan and Cambodia on their ratification of the Convention, and to express my pleasure in welcoming them among members of the Authority.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

The increase in the numbers of Parties to the Convention and the nearly universal acceptance of its rules reflect the importance that the Convention still carries as (in the words of his excellency Ambassador Tommy Koh) the constitution for the oceans.

And yet, today the framework created by the Convention is at risk. As Parties are certainly aware, threats of commencement of activities in the Area outside the framework established by the Convention undermine the mandate of the Authority, and the principles, that for more than thirty years, have guided its work.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

Please allow me to reiterate what I said one year ago at the last meeting of Parties, that the Authority was created to prevent a lawless race to the bottom for resources and to ensure that any activities in the Area are carried out for the benefit of all countries, particularly developing States, and with due regard for the marine environment. The integrity of the Authority is the integrity of the Convention, a core value that we have undertaken to protect and uphold.

Mr. President,

I now wish to address the main advancements in the Authority's work. For a more detailed description, I invite you to consider the annual report

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly, pursuant to Article 166, paragraph 4 of the Convention, dated 22 May 2026.

### **ISA membership and status of the agreements**

As I mentioned before, with the accession of Kyrgyzstan and Cambodia, there are now 172 Parties to the Convention, which are *ipso facto* members of the Authority.

155 Parties have joined the 1994 Agreement, and there are therefore 17 members of the Authority that became Parties to the Convention before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement and have yet to ratify it. I strongly

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

encourage those States to consider ratifying the 1994 Agreement to ensure legal coherence with the current institutional framework, noting however the current arrangements and the interpretation rule reflected in General Assembly resolution 48/263 and the Agreement itself.

I also wish to inform you that as of 31 March 2026, a total of 20 members of the Authority have deposited the charts or lists of geographical coordinates indicating the outer limits of their continental shelf, in accordance with Article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention. I take this opportunity to thank all the States that have already submitted their coordinates, and I urge those which have not yet done so to submit their

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

charts or coordinates as soon as the outer limits of their continental shelf have been established.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the governments of four member States – the Marshall Islands, Lesotho, Sri Lanka and the Bahamas – appointed permanent representatives to the Authority for the first time, and as a result a total of 46 members now maintain permanent missions to the Authority.

## **Financial status**

Mr President,

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

I will now briefly address the financial status of the Authority, before moving to aspects relating to its substantive work.

The Parties will recall that at its twenty-ninth session, the Assembly adopted the budget for the financial period 2025–2026 in the amount of USD 26,427,000 (twenty-six millions, four hundred twenty-seven thousand).

As of 31 March 2026, 54 per cent of the value of contributions to the 2026 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 – 2025) amounted to USD 1,151,477 (one

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

million, one hundred and fifty-one thousand, four hundred seventy-seven). Please allow me to take this opportunity to urge all States parties to pay their outstanding contributions, and to remind them that being in arrear for two years or more may affect their voting rights in accordance with article 184 of the Convention and rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

I am also pleased to report that on 15 May 2026 the budget proposal for the financial period of 2027-2028 was made available to the Finance Committee alongside the supporting documentation.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

As of 31 March 2026, the balance of the working capital fund stood at USD 777,863, (seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand, eight hundred sixty-three) against an approved level of USD 825,000 (eight hundred twenty-five thousands).

Regarding 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, I wish to acknowledge the contributions made by China, Cyprus, India, Ireland, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Ocean Mineral Singapore PTE Ltd, and to thank those who have contributed. I encourage the Parties to continue contributing to

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

these funds to ensure the full participation in the meetings of experts coming from developing countries.

With regard to the 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, please allow me to acknowledge the contributions received from Cyprus, Italy, Mauritius, Nauru, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Again, please allow me to thank the Parties that have contributed to this fund, and to encourage further contributions. As of 31 March 2026, cumulative contributions to the fund over its lifetime amounted to USD 338,450 (three

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

hundred and thirty-eight thousand, four hundred fifty), with an available balance of USD 13,909 (thirteen thousand, nine hundred and nine).

## **ISA's Mandate and Progress on the Mining Code**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Please allow me to move to the substantive work of the Authority, starting with the progress in the negotiations of the Mining Code. As you are aware, the Authority is entrusted with the administration of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction, the Area, representing 54% of the total seabed of our oceans.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

In doing so, the Authority must ensure the equitable sharing of benefits, and guarantee the effective protection of the marine environment, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, through the adoption of its rules, regulations and procedures.

The Council of the Authority is currently in the process of negotiating the draft Regulations on Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area. Over the past year, the Council made significant progress towards the adoption of a robust and consistent regulatory framework, reflecting the highest standards of environmental protection.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

During the second part of the thirtieth session in July 2025, the Council concluded the second reading of the Revised Consolidated Text of the draft Regulations and held several thematic discussions on specific aspects of the draft regulations, with the support of those delegations that have volunteered to be Facilitators and Friends of the President.

At the end of the second part of the thirtieth session, the Council decided to follow a thematic approach for the thirty-first session towards resolving the remaining key outstanding matters in the draft Regulations. In that regard, the Council requested the secretariat to prepare a further revised consolidated text well in advance of the first meeting of the thirty-first

session. Please allow me to take this opportunity to thank again the Council for the trust placed in the professionalism of the secretariat, in the preparation of the text. The Council additionally requested the secretariat to prepare a draft indicative list of outstanding issues, to inform the modalities of work for the thirty-first session.

During the first part of the thirty-first session in March, the Council conducted constructive discussions on the basis of the Further Revised Consolidated Text and on the draft indicative list of outstanding issues prepared by the secretariat. I am pleased to report that the Council

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

managed to discuss 29 of the 32 outstanding issues identified, and that some of them were also agreed in principle.

For the second part of the thirty-first session, the secretariat has been requested to prepare a revised version of the Further Revised Consolidated Text, the so-called “Rev.3”, and a revised indicative list of outstanding issues, based on the discussions carried out during the first part and on the intersessional work. Both documents will soon be delivered for consideration of the Council.

Please allow me to reiterate, Mr President, what I have already said in a number of different occasions. The adoption of the Regulations is now

more than ever needed, in order to ensure that a comprehensive, robust and consistent regulatory framework is in place for activities in the Area, that the highest standards of environmental protection are respected, and that the principle of the common heritage of humankind is fully upheld and implemented. The adoption of the Regulations is essential to ensure that the delicate system created by the Convention will inform ocean governance in the next decades.

This is not a call for haste. It is a call for responsibility. The Authority must deliver the regulatory framework that the Convention requires, through the multilateral processes that the Convention created.

## **Updates on exploration activities carried out in the Area**

Mr President, please allow me to provide a brief update on exploration activities carried out in the Area. As of 31 March 2026, 31 contracts for exploration were in force, 19 of them for polymetallic nodules, 8 for polymetallic sulphides and 4 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts.

30 annual reports in relation to 30 exploration contracts were received by the secretariat. In relation to the new contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed by the government of India on 15 September 2025, the report on the progress of work carried out in 2025 will be provided in its 2026 annual report.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

During the second part of its thirtieth session, in June and July 2025, in the context of its consideration of the annual reports on activities carried out by contractors in 2023, the Legal and Technical Commission, in line with the agreed procedure, determined that three contractors required continued attention regarding their performance and alignment with their contractual obligations. The Commission also identified other contractors requiring specific attention for the next review cycle, in line with the applicable modalities.

During the first part of the thirty-first session, in March 2026, the Commission reviewed responses from the nine contractors identified at

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

its previous session as requiring specific attention. It noted that while some contactors had provided satisfactory responses, other responses required further clarification and review. The Commission will continue its consideration of the matter as part of the review of the annual reports during the second part of its meetings and report to the Council accordingly.

I am also pleased to report that from 18-20 September 2025, the eighth annual consultative meeting with contractors was held in Goa, India, in collaboration with the Government of India through its Ministry of Earth Sciences and the National Institute of Oceanography. Participants

exchanged views on the progress made on the draft exploitation regulations, and discussed communication between the Commission and contractors, common concerns and challenges faced by contractors and avenues to enhance collaboration among contractors. I wish to thank again the Government of India for their generous hospitality.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, the Secretary-General held two dialogues, in the margins of the Council meetings of July 2025 and March 2026 respectively, one with contractors, and one with sponsoring States.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the activities that the Interim Director-General of the Enterprise has carried out in the reporting period in

accordance with the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and the Council's directives. His undertakings have included active participation in Council negotiations on the draft regulations, including through the joint paper presented with the United Kingdom on the Treatment of the Enterprise in the regulations, discussed during the first part of the thirty-first session. The Interim Director-General has also participated in intersessional working groups, and bilateral meetings with stakeholders.

Further details on the work of the Interim Director-General will be provided in his annual report to the Council and the Assembly during the second part of the thirty-first session in July 2026.

## **Commencement of proceedings by NORI and TOML**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates.

Before moving to the part of my intervention dedicated to the other activities and projects that have been developed in the reporting period, please allow me to draw your attention to a situation of which most of you are certainly aware. On 5 June 2025, I was officially served by the Registrar of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the ITLOS, with two applications filed by two contractors against the Authority.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

The proceedings are currently ongoing, and in the interest of confidentiality I will only inform this distinguished Conference that the next hearing is scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July. I further wish to reassure the distinguished Parties that these proceedings are being considered with the outmost seriousness by the secretariat, and that the relevant organs of the Authority will be kept informed of any development.

### **Programmatic activities**

Mr President, the mandate of the Authority extends beyond the development of its rules, regulations, and procedures. Therefore, I would now like to move to the other programmes and activities that the Authority

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

has carried out in the reporting period. In the interest of time, I will only address some of them, relating in particular to marine scientific research and capacity-building, but I invite you to consider the annual report uploaded on the website of the Authority to have an idea of all the activities undertaken in the reporting period.

## **Marine scientific research**

On the side of marine scientific research, the secretariat's efforts have been directed to fulfil its commitment to transparency and to democratizing deep-sea science, so that scientists from all countries can

access information about the resources and the environment of the Area, in line with the spirit of Article 143 of the Convention.

I am pleased to report that the ISA Deep-Sea Biobank initiative was further expanded to enhance access to deep-sea biological samples and associated genetic data, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea in November 2025. A set of standard operating procedures on sampling, processing and sharing of biological samples and genetic data from the Area, building upon existing best practices is being developed with a view to enhancing scientific collaboration and data quality.

At the same time, the Authority's DeepData database continues to serve as a one-stop platform for access to environmental data submitted by contractors. The platform is continuously updated through the upload of additional datasets, while the quality of data submissions is being progressively enhanced through targeted knowledge exchange activities with contractor data managers and international partners.

Furthermore, two workshop reports concerning technical aspects were finalized during the reporting period. The first one provides an overview of emerging monitoring technologies, drawing on the outcomes of an expert workshop held in Kobe, Japan, in June 2025. The second report reflects

the state of the art in science for the Indian Ocean to support the further development of its Regional Environmental Management Plan (REMP).

Additionally, a knowledge product on the status of environmental baselines highlights their importance for impact assessment and a technical highlight focuses on the occurrence, geological characteristics of rare earth elements in seabed sediments as a potential resource. As a next step, a roadmap is being developed to inform the further implementation of the action plan for the coming five years, building on knowledge priorities identified in the regulatory context and by the scientific community.

## **Capacity-building and training**

Moving to capacity-building and training, I would first like to mention that the secretariat has continued to successfully deliver the Deep Dive programme, a comprehensive online training on deep-sea governance, marine resources, scientific research, environmental protection, and extraction technologies through its five core modules. As of 31 March 2026, 276 participants have been certified from 178 countries, including Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States, and Landlocked Developing Countries. All regional groups were represented, with 123 certified from the African Group, 79 certified from the Asia-

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

Pacific Group, 7 from the Eastern European Group, 28 from GRULAC, and 25 from WEOG.

Additionally, the secretariat has participated in the in-person Global Ocean Governance Workshop in Rome, Italy, from 16 to 18 June 2025. The workshop was co-financed by the World Bank's Ocean Governance Capacity Building Programme funded by PROBLUE, FAO's Deep Fisheries Project of the GEF-funded Common Oceans Programme, and the Norway-funded EAF Nansen Programme.

The workshop offered an opportunity to deepen collaboration and integrate international legal instruments on the ocean. This was delivered

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

in partnership with the FAO, the UN DOALOS, the World Bank, the Melbourne University Law School and the University of Nantes. The workshop gathered 48 outstanding alumni of the Ocean Governance Capacity Building Training Programme's previous regional online trainings. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Italy for hosting this important workshop.

Please also allow me to mention a programme to which I am particularly committed, the See Her Exceed (or "S.H.E.") Programme. During the reporting period, the first phase of the S.H.E. Programme was concluded successfully with the support of the Government of France. In December

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

2025, the secretariat and the Government of France co-hosted a high-level webinar entitled "Celebrating Women in Deep-Sea Science and Technological Innovation: Creating Lasting Impact through Knowledge Transfer," which drew more than 160 participants from over 35 countries. The pilot cohort delivered two S.H.E. knowledge outputs, a synthesis of marine scientific research and an analysis of barriers for women to participate in exploration at sea. The latter informed the development of the "S.H.E. Gender Compact practical guidelines to promote the safe participation of women in at sea activities". The second phase of S.H.E will encompass a community of practice on cumulative impacts as well as a "S.H.E Law in the Sea" (SHELAW) to enhance the participation of

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

female policy makers of developing countries in deep-seabed governance.

Lastly, I would like to mention that pursuant to the memorandum of understanding between the Authority and the International Relations Institute of Cameroon, the Africa Academy for Deep Sea Diplomacy training programme was implemented with the support of the ISA Partnership Fund.

The programme was designed to strengthen the capacity of early-to mid-career professionals from African States, with particular emphasis on diplomats, government officials and policy makers engaged in ocean,

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

legal, environmental and marine affairs. The call for application attracted 205 applications from 39 African countries, demonstrating significant interest in the programme across the continent. 26 participants (13 females and 13 males) from 16 African countries participated, representing 5 subregions in Africa including Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States.

## **International Day of the Deep Seabed**

Mr President,

Finally, I would like to report that the International Day of the Deep Seabed was first celebrated on 1 November 2025, marking a significant milestone for global awareness of the Area's mineral resources as common heritage. The initiative was proposed by Fiji, Jamaica, Malta, and Singapore in June 2025 and adopted by the Assembly on 23 July 2025, choosing the date to honour Ambassador Pardo's speech at the UN in 1967.

A successful campaign was launched, which included various promotional materials and stories to enhance public interest and understanding of the Authority's work. The inaugural observance involved participation from several Member States, notably a major event in India,

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

emphasizing the importance of innovation and responsible exploration. The UN General Assembly noted with appreciation the proclamation by the Assembly of 1 November as the International Day of the Deep Seabed.

Planning for the second celebration on 1 November 2026 is currently underway, and I trust that many of you will be able to join us in commemorating this important occasion.

### **Concluding remarks**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

In concluding this intervention, please allow me to reiterate what I already said on several occasions. The Authority is now at a pivotal moment of its history, and faces serious challenges to its mandate and to the integrity of the regime established under the Convention.

In this scenario, protecting the Authority means protecting the Convention, and this must be more than a collective effort from all of us. It must be a collective duty and responsibility.

With this spirit in mind, I am pleased to mention that I have requested the inclusion of an additional item on the agenda of the Assembly of the Authority, on a request for an advisory opinion from the Seabed Disputes

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea pursuant to article 191 of the Convention on matters relating to the legal implications for the International Seabed Authority of activities in the Area undertaken by non-States Parties.

This request is intended as a call to action. It is about ensuring that the responsibility entrusted to us is effectively fulfilled. We cannot allow the legal regime that States built together over decades to be weakened. We cannot allow the common heritage of humankind to become a matter of selective application.

*Thirty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS*

The vision entrusted to us was one of solidarity among States, and solidarity across generations. Today, in the face of renewed challenges to the integrity of the regime, that vision is more urgent than ever. I therefore count on your continued support to uphold the mandate of the Authority, to defend the integrity of the Convention, and to ensure that the Area and its resources remain governed for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

Thank you.