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Annual report of the Secretary-General under article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention

Implementation of the action plan of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 and the 1994 Agreement (UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement) entrust the International Seabed Authority (the Authority) with the mandate to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and; to coordinate and disseminate the results when available.^{1,2} To discharge this mandate, the Authority is a global catalyst for strengthening partnerships, facilitating expert workshops, commissioning topic-specific reports, and delivering knowledge outputs in domains of relevance.

2. Additionally, under UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, the Authority has the responsibility to take measures to promote and encourage the transfer of scientific knowledge and technology to strengthen the capacity of developing and technologically less developed States including through the establishment of appropriate programmes.³ The majority of activities it carries to fulfil these responsibilities are focused on marine scientific research.

3. In 2017, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the “Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development” and mandated the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO-IOC) to coordinate its implementation.⁴ As a participating entity within UN Oceans, the Authority was invited to support the delivery of the UN Ocean Decade. The Authority’s Assembly subsequently formalised

* ISBA/31/A/L.1

¹ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 143 (2).

² 1994 Agreement, para. 5 (h).

³ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 143 (3).

⁴ A/RES/72/73 para. 292.

its contribution by committing to the action plan for marine scientific research in support of the UN Ocean Decade (action plan for marine scientific research).⁵

4. The Secretary-General of the Authority reports annually to the Assembly on the status on the implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research. This year marks the fifth of such reports and covers the period from July 2025 to June 2026. It presents the progress in action and knowledge generation across the six strategic research priorities, as well as efforts in stakeholder engagement and resource mobilisation, and next steps.^{6,7}

5. During the reporting period, the Secretariat focused on implementing the recommendations contained in a report taking stock on the contributions of the Authority to the UN Ocean Decade, published in December 2025.⁸ The group of experts that authored the report advised the Secretary-General to develop flagship initiatives for those strategic research priorities that did not yet have an overarching framework, while scaling up existing programmes and fostering innovation through the launch of new initiatives.

6. Compared to the previous reporting period, the activities increased and diversified. The training workshops doubled, while the number of knowledge outputs published increased threefold.⁹ Four new donors were attracted to scale up the efforts in biodiversity assessment.¹⁰ In terms of projects, the flagship ISA Biobank Initiative, promoting the sharing of genetic information, was further implemented and two new projects on cumulative impacts and regional environmental monitoring were conceived. The pilot of the global mentoring programme for women from developing countries S.H.E. was concluded and will now be expanded to the domain of the law of the sea. Efforts in data management and technology were further strengthened, with the DeepData website and dashboard attracting approximately 96,000 visitors that downloaded over 200 gigabytes of data. Enhancements focused on improving data security and system upgraded with a new partnership. In the field of technology, a report on trends in environmental monitoring and rare earth minerals were published and new scoping initiative on patents was launched.

7. In the coming year, priority will be placed on the further implementation of ongoing initiatives and on promoting science that generates the information required to meet emerging regulatory needs, while also strengthening the Authority's expertise relevant to the pillars of the BBNJ Agreement.

⁵ ISBA/26/A/4.

⁶ ISBA/28/A/8.

⁷ ISBA/29/A/5.

⁸ <https://isa.org.jm/publications/the-contribution-of-the-international-seabed-authority-to-the-scientific-objectives-of-the-un-decade-of-ocean-science-for-sustainable-development/>

⁹ A technical brief on rare earth minerals, a policy brief on environmental baselines, two reports of the S.H.E. Global Mentoring Programme, and two workshop reports on technology and the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Indian Ocean were published. Two training workshops under the ISA's Joint Training Research Centres and two training workshops under the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative.

¹⁰ People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), the Portuguese Republic and the Republic of India, joined the European Union, the Republic of Korea and the French Republic.

II. Progress in knowledge generation across the strategic research priorities of the action plan for marine scientific research

Strategic research priority 1: advancing scientific knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems in the Area

8. Advancing the understanding of deep-sea ecosystems is fundamental to underpin science-based decision-making based on the precautionary approach. The development of the Authority's regulatory processes is a key driver to advance deep-sea science, while also identifying areas where further knowledge generation is required as illustrated below.

9. First the development of Regional Environmental Management Plans (REMPs) – a process led by Legal and Technical Commission with support from the Secretariat and external experts - requires data assessment as well as a systematic review of the latest scientific developments. During the reporting period, the workshop report of the development of the REMP for the Indian Ocean, held in April 2025 in Qingdao, People's Republic of China, was finalized. In addition, to further advance the REMP for the Northwest Pacific, a workshop will take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 18 to 21 May, in collaboration with the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea and the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology.

10. Second to develop environmental thresholds for toxicity, turbidity and settling of resuspended sediments and underwater noise and light pollution, the intersessional expert group assessed the state of the art in these domains including regulatory examples from other industries. Its report will be released for public stakeholder consultation during the intersessional period of the thirty-first session. More specifically, the report demonstrates how ecological reference points can be determined from a meta-analysis of species sensitivity curves across a gradient of sediment concentrations. This provides a science-based path to define zones-of-impact that can inform management actions and threshold levels considering environmental, economic and societal values.

11. To raise awareness of the progress in deep sea science, the Secretariat publishes knowledge outputs. In January, a policy brief illustrated how the development of environmental baselines has been strengthened through the requirements of the Authority's comprehensive legal framework and the technical guidance of the Commission.¹¹ Additionally, experts from the Secretariat contributed to the third edition of the World Ocean Assessment: Global Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspect. To draw attention to the chapters addressing deep-sea-related issues, an online awareness-raising event will be organized by the Secretariat after its official launch in May 2026.

Strategic research priority 2: standardizing and innovating methodologies for deep-sea biodiversity assessment, including taxonomic identification and description, in the Area

12. To further advance biodiversity assessments, the Secretariat progressed the implementation of the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SSKI). Launched in 2022, SSKI is a multi-donor, global collaborative platform combining innovation, research and capacity-building in support of evidence-based decision-making. This reporting period witnessed a scale-up in SSKI's impact resulting from the support of eight donors: the Republic of Ireland, People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), the Portuguese Republic and

¹¹ [ISA-Environmental-Baseline-Policy-Brief-SSKI_2025.pdf](#)

the Republic of India, joining SSKI's founding donors, the European Union, the Republic of Korea and the French Republic.¹²

13. A new initiative developed in partnership with the Republic of Korea, "ISA Deep-Sea Biobank", was launched to facilitate open access to deep-sea biological samples and genetic data at the UN Ocean Conference III. Under this initiative the Secretariat will support the development of a global repository to be hosted by the Republic of Korea. Building expertise in this area is strategic for the Authority, as it contributes to global governance efforts, including under the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement). As a next step, standard operating procedures for the sampling, processing and sharing of deep-sea biological samples and genetic data will be developed with the collaboration of an international group of experts.

14. A second new initiative was launched in collaboration with the UK consisting of the pilot development of an image reference library for the Clarion Clipperton Zone. The use of artificial intelligence tools on these imagery data enhances the understanding of the regional distribution of biological assemblages and the assessment of anthropogenic impacts in the Area.

15. Accelerating the description of at least 1,000 new deep-sea species by 2030 remains the core objective of SSKI. To this end, the second edition of the "One Thousand Reasons" campaign was launched in March 2025 supported by the contribution of the Republic of Ireland to the Partnership Fund. In collaboration with the World Register of Marine Species, the Secretariat awarded six grants to scientists from four developing countries to describe approximately 100 new species by 2026.¹³

16. Another key priority of SSKI is to advance the scientific capacity of developing countries in deep-sea taxonomy. In this context, the Republic of France continued its support to the ISA-IFREMER Meioscool workshop on deep-sea meiofauna through the Partnership Fund. This year's workshop will take place from 13 to 17th of April in Plouzané, Republic of France. Building on previous editions, it will deliver hands-on practical classes, online courses and a training kit for future generations of practitioners. In parallel, an ISA-Ifremer Meioscool postdoctoral fellowship was awarded to an Argentinian female scientist to support her to become a trainer and host future workshop editions.

17. Inspired by the success of the ISA-IFREMER Meioscool, a workshop on macrofauna taxonomy will be held in Kochi, Republic of India in September 2026, in collaboration with long-lasting SSKI partner, the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea (MABIK), and co-financed by the Republic of France and the Republic of Portugal. The objectives are to build technical capacity in macrofauna taxonomy, data management and sample curation —areas that remain limited in many developing States.

Strategic research priority 3: facilitating technology development for activities in the Area, including ocean observation and monitoring

18. The Authority is mandated to facilitate and promote the transfer of technology in a manner that benefits all member States.¹⁴ The use of the best available technology, together with its effective and appropriate transfer, constitute key pillars – alongside sound marine spatial planning – in achieving environmental protection.

19. To facilitate technology development, the Secretariat evaluates and disseminates the development across five priority domains: monitoring; autonomy, automation,

¹² ISA Website SSKI homepage.

¹³ <https://www.isa.org.jm/news/call-for-taxonomy-projects-to-describe-deep-sea-species/>

and robotics; machine learning and artificial intelligence; mining, energy, and metal processing and ocean observation and communication.

20. To fulfil its platform role and catalyse innovation, the Secretariat engages with stakeholders through conferences, meetings and workshops while facilitating the formulation of projects in the priority domains. During the reporting period, four activities were undertaken.

21. First the Secretariat participated in the Underwater Minerals Conference in St Pete Beach, Florida from 9 to 14 November 2025.¹⁵ This annual conference is the largest global forum for ocean-mineral stakeholders, exposing participants to the latest technological innovation for monitoring. The Secretariat convened a session on trends in technology-development during which beneficiaries of the Authority's capacity-development initiatives provided testimonials on technology transfer, including a female mentee from the ISA Global Mentoring Programme. The Interim Director-General of the Enterprise also presented on the legal framework for technology transfer and highlighted opportunities for developing States to engage in this process.

22. Second to disseminate emerging technology trends, two knowledge outputs were produced during the reporting period. First the report of the annual ISA technology workshop held in collaboration with Kobe University and its Kobe Ocean-Bottom Exploration Centre in the State of Japan in June 2025 was finalized. The report provides an overview of emerging monitoring technologies and assesses the opportunities of technological innovation for regional monitoring and threshold development. Once participants have reviewed the final draft, the report will be made available on the Authority's website. Second, a technical highlight focused on marine metalliferous sediments, which are widely distributed across the ocean floor and represent a potentially valuable geological resource. Technologies for their exploration are well established, and it is recommended that further technological advancements in this field be encouraged.¹⁶

23. Thirdly the Secretariat has also formulated an 'Adaptive Observing Programme' framework targeting areas of particular environmental interest in the Clarion Clipperton Zone. It shall integrate best available technologies and apply machine learning models to optimize data acquisition and refine sampling strategies. The first step, funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, will validate the habitat map that formed the basis for the development of the REMP of the region. In addition, the Secretariat commissioned a scoping exercise on the patents issued on deep-sea technology to examine innovation trends to further inform its work under this strategic research priority.

Strategic research priority 4: enhancing scientific knowledge and understanding of potential impacts of activities in the Area

24. Environmental impact assessments are an integral part of the implementation of the precautionary approach and ensure sustainable use while protecting the marine environment.¹⁷ They enable the Authority to discharge its mandate to take measures to prevent potential harm to marine ecosystem resulting from activities in the Area.

25. During the reporting period a new project proposal was developed to strengthen the scientific basis for assessing potential cumulative impacts arising from the interaction of multiple anthropogenic activities within a given area. This field is of increasing scientific and strategic importance, due to its relevance for effective marine environmental management across global governance processes.¹⁸ As an initial step,

¹⁵ [Underwater Minerals Conference | UMC](#)

¹⁶ [ISA Technical Highlight 1/2025](#)

¹⁷ [UNCLOS, Article 144 and 145.](#)

the Secretariat commissioned a literature review of existing methodologies in collaboration with the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP). This activity is co-sponsored by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In Q4 of 2026, the Secretariat shall organize an inception workshop to formally launch the project.

26. Fisheries are among the impacts to be considered in areas beyond national jurisdiction. During the reporting period, the Secretariat continued its collaboration with FAO and participated in a workshop held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 24 to 26 September 2026 under the Deep-Sea Fisheries Project. The participants examined potential interactions between deep-sea fisheries, exploration activities, and potential mining. This workshop marked the first activity toward implementing the Memorandum of Understanding with FAO, signed on the margins of the UN Oceans Conference in Nice in June 2025. Further activities will focus on advancing scientific approaches for the sustainable management of activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction and on the exchange of non-confidential data on deep-sea biodiversity with strong emphasis on capacity-building, awareness-raising, and the promotion of gender equality.

Strategic research priority 5: promoting dissemination, exchange and sharing of scientific data and deep-sea research outputs and increasing deep-sea literacy

27. This research priority covers both data and deep-sea literacy. The latter constitutes a fundamental element in enhancing the understanding of the deep sea. A key milestone in this regard was the launch of the first-ever Global Deep-Seabed Day, accompanied by promotional videos highlighting the work of the Authority. Further details are provided in the Secretary-General's annual report. The following sections focus on the sharing of scientific data through the Authority's global online repository, "ISA Deep Seabed and Ocean Database" (DeepData).

28. As the contractors advance their exploration, increasing data are collected and submitted to the Secretariat using templates. The Secretariat uploads all the environmental and oceanographic data to DeepData following the 'findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable' (FAIR) principle. The Secretariat thus maintains and expands DeepData while ensuring its security, data quality, and user-friendliness. Additionally, the Secretariat establishes partnerships to leverage external expertise; it also undertakes capacity-development activities to ensure that all humankind participates in and benefits from these resources. The progress made in these domains is described below.

29. During the reporting period, the DeepData website and dashboard attracted approximately 96,000 visitors during the reporting period, these visitors downloaded over 200 gigabytes of data.

30. DeepData was expanded by over 80 gigabytes from the contractor's annual submissions. In addition, datasets collected during earlier phases of exploration, often provided in heterogeneous formats were also added. Integrating these historic datasets requires additional processing prior to upload; however, this work is essential as it enables the analysis of long-term trends across parameters. Recognizing this, the structuring of historical data was prioritized in internal workflows and further supported through the launch of a dedicated research-project call in January 2026 under the ISA-China Joint Training and Research Center (cfr. paragraph 37).

31. In preparation for Hurricane Melissa, DeepData’s hardware was upgraded, including the development of a high-availability geo-redundant site to support disaster recovery, as well as additional security measures to ensure a safer operating environment.

32. To increase the use of data for scientific research, the Secretariat continued to share environmental and oceanographic data through other global networks and interconnected platforms. Biodiversity data are made available through the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), while oceanographic data is also accessible through the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) coordinated by the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. Ensuring the interoperability of these datasets requires significant technical effort.

33. In addition, the Secretariat collaborated during the reporting period with DHI, an organization specialized in digital environmental solutions, with whom a letter of support was signed in 2025.¹⁹ Following a gap analysis, DHI developed a demonstration of potential system upgrades and submitted a proposal for their implementation.

34. Finally, the Secretariat commissioned a consultancy to assess gaps in expertise and infrastructure among Caribbean Small Islands Developing States to develop strategic recommendations for capacity enhancement in their DeepData data use and management. This activity contributes also to the implementation of the Authority’s capacity development strategy.²⁰

Strategic research priority 6: strengthening deep-sea scientific capacity of Authority members, in particular developing States

35. Advancing marine scientific research is closely linked with training and capacity-building activities, notably through the Authority’s mandate of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of developing member States. In this context, the Secretariat facilitates courses, organizes knowledge exchange workshops and implements a range of other programmes, to fulfil this mandate, in line with the Authority’s capacity development strategy.²¹

36. The longest-lasting, in the Authority’s history, training of experts from developing States is achieved through the legally binding obligation of contractors under the Contractors’ Training Programme (CTP). Additionally, the ISA Partnership Fund, a multi-donor trust fund, provides financing for projects advancing marine scientific research while providing capacity development opportunities since 2022.²² One example is a knowledge transfer workshop to be organized later this year on the regional environmental management process with special emphasis on biological assessments. Further details on the milestones of both the CTP and the Partnership Fund are provided in the Secretary-General’s annual report.²³ To complement that analysis, the following paragraphs focus on the milestones achieved in the reporting period through two additional mechanisms of experts training.

37. First, the Authority’s impact in capacity development was scaled through its two joint national and regional research and training centres.²⁴ The ISA-China JTRC, established in 2020, has trained 121 experts from developing countries in data assessment, regional environmental planning and technology development through

¹⁹ [DHI - Digital solutions](#)

²⁰ [ISBA/27/A/7](#)

²¹ [ISBA/27/A/5](#).

²² [ISBA/27/A/10](#)

²³ [ISBA/31/A/X](#)

²⁴ [UNCLOS, Article 276 and 277](#)

three knowledge transfer workshops in Qingdao, People's Republic of China.²⁵ From 25th May 2026 to the 5th of June, the centre's fourth workshop will provide training in cumulative impact assessments in Sanya. In addition, the centre has funded its first research project: researchers from the Seabed Minerals Authority of the Cook Islands are advancing biodiversity assessments of the Northwest Pacific in collaboration with the Second Institute of Oceanography, China.²⁶ Furthermore, the centre launched its second call for research proposals in March 2026, focussing on historical data. Under the ISA Egypt Joint Training and Research Centre established in 2024 and affiliated with the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (NIOF) in Alexandria, two knowledge-transfer workshops on environmental impacts and offshore exploration were conducted. In 2026, the centre's training will focus on technology development.

38. Secondly, in the domain of women's empowerment, the first phase of the Authority's Global Mentoring Programme S.H.E – "See Her Exceed" was concluded in December 2025. Launched in 2023, S.H.E. is a flagship initiative advancing women's empowerment in deep-sea-related affairs. The Secretariat, in collaboration with and sponsored by the Republic of France organized two events and presented an award to the most outstanding mentee of Kenya. During the second part of the 30th Session, the six African mentees presented their results to the Authority's Member States and graduated. Second, on 3 December 2025, the S.H.E. community launched two knowledge outputs in a webinar attended by more than 160 participants representing over 35 countries. These outputs included (i) an expert analysis of recent trends in marine scientific research and innovation, and (ii) a study examining the drivers of women's participation in at-sea activities.^{27,28} The findings of the latter informed the development of the S.H.E. Gender Charter, which sets out seven commitments that entities organizing at-sea activities can undertake to promote gender equality and increase women's participation offshore. The Secretary-General launched a stakeholder consultation to enhance the S.H.E Gender Charter's legitimacy in preparation for its official launch during the Assembly of the 31st session. Building on the success of the pilot cohort, the second phase of S.H.E will establish a community of practice for women experts on cumulative impact assessment. Additionally, the Secretary-General will launch a S.H.E track for female policy makers aimed at strengthening the capacity of developing countries to engage in the law of the sea processes.

III. Global engagement to leverage the implementation of the MSR Action Plan

39. Missions undertaken by the Secretary-General constitute a central pillar of the global engagement strategy, aimed at securing political support and mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Action Plan. During the reporting period, the Secretary-General conducted missions to eight countries, engaged with the European Commission and other intergovernmental bodies. These engagements included high-level ministerial meetings on strategic priorities, as well as scientific and technical exchanges on key issues such as biodiversity and data management.

²⁵ [ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre - International Seabed Authority](#)

²⁶ Project partners are the Seabed Mineral Authority of the Cook Islands and the Second Institute of Oceanography, China.

²⁷ <https://isa.org.jm/publications/progress-in-marine-scientific-research-and-innovation-2020-2024-an-expert-analysis-by-the-s-h-e-community-isas-global-mentoring-programme-see-her-exceed/>

²⁸ <https://isa.org.jm/publications/advancing-gender-equity-in-deep-sea-research-activities-addressing-the-barriers-to-womens-participation-in-at-sea-missions/>

40. The knowledge, tools, and methodologies developed under the action plan for marine research requires extrabudgetary funding and in-kind support. In this context, global engagement through partnerships, interaction with other global processes and resource mobilisation effort are central to the Secretariat's work.

41. Contributing to other multilateral processes and engaging with intergovernmental organizations are essential for the Authority's global engagement. The following paragraphs highlight the main achievements during the reporting period in this domain.

42. Two key platforms for engagement are UN-Oceans and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

a) The Secretariat participated in regular meetings of UN-Oceans providing updates on its activities. In addition, on 15th of January, the Deputy Secretary-General participated in the UN-Oceans Meeting of Principals on Enhancing Coordination, Collaboration and Effectiveness in Capacity-Building through UN-Oceans. He underscored the importance of upholding multilateralism in a synergistic manner and encouraged all UN-Oceans members to capitalize on complementarities and synergies.

b) Since January 2026 the Secretariat serves on the UN Decade Advisory Board. It participated remotely in its first meeting from 10 to 12 February 2026, where it emphasized the importance of the marine scientific action plan as the global framework for advancing deep-sea research.

43. Another priority is the Authority's engagement with the BBNJ Agreement. The Secretariat organized a side event during the BBNJ I Preparatory Commission in August 2025, a high-level workshop in November 2025 in New York, and participated in the II Preparatory Commission in March 2026. The Secretary-General continues to call for constructive engagement between the two ocean governance regimes building on the Authority's ample experience in key elements of the BBNJ process.

44. The Authority's work biodiversity assessment for example under SSKI and the ISA Deep-sea Biobank is also relevant to developments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Secretariat participated in the expert workshop on scientific and technical work conducted under the CBD relevant to marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, held from 2 to 5 December in Bergen, the Kingdom Norway.

45. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) remain a strategic partner with whom the Secretariat maintains close engagement. During the reporting period, the Secretariat provided feedback on the first draft of the third edition of the World Ocean Assessment under the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including socio-economic aspects, which has since been published. In addition, on 6 November 2025, the Secretariat provided a lecture on the activities of the Authority on marine scientific research to two cohorts of United Nations–Nippon Foundation Fellows, comprising 21 government officials.

46. The Secretariat also monitors other relevant developments under the United Nations, and it has become a member of the United Nations Environment Management Group. In this context, the Secretariat participated in the VII United Nations Environment Assembly where it presented its activities under the marine scientific research action plan and the progress in the regional environmental management plans in the side event "Race to the Bottom? Fostering Evidence-Based Dialogue and Action on Deep-Sea Minerals and Metals".

47. During the reporting period, the Secretariat intensified its effort to enhance engagement of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) in the activities of the Authority. First, a seminar was organized in New York in August 2025 in the margins of the BBNJ I Preparatory Committee where the activities of the Secretariat in promoting marine scientific research were presented to the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations. Secondly, a workshop is planned to take place in September 2026 in the Plurinational State of Bolivia as chair of the LLDCs group. This workshop will focus, inter alia, on benefit-sharing, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). These efforts aim to enhance understanding of the rights and opportunities of LLDCs under UNCLOS and its Part XI including opportunities in marine scientific research.

48. Finally, the continued participation of the Secretariat in advisory committees of research and technology projects maximizes synergies with initiatives under the action plan for marine scientific research. During the reporting period, the Secretariat participated in three side events organized by managers of projects for which it serves on the advisory board. These included: (i) the EU-funded “Technology Based Impact Assessment Tool For Sustainable Transparent Deep Sea Mining”, which develops and test innovative tools for environmental monitoring; (ii) the Mining Impact 3 project, launched in June 2025 under the Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans), focusing on the environmental impacts of deep-sea mining; (iii) the UK-funded SMARTEX project, which examines deep-sea ecosystem resilience, with a particular focus on recovery dynamics in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.^{29, 30}

IV. Next steps

49. Drawing on more than 30 years of experience, the Authority’s frontrunner role within the international ocean governance provides a solid foundation to navigate the evolving global landscape, contribute to the implementation of ocean global agendas and to swiftly identify emerging scientific opportunities.

50. In the next reporting period, the Secretariat proposes to prioritize, first, the continued expansion of the flagship initiatives that are ongoing or were launched during this reporting period; second, the identification and advancement of research topics that feed the science–policy interface; and third, the advancement of scientific domains of global relevance that further deepen its engagement with the BBNJ Agreement.

51. The knowledge generation and facilitation of its transfer will be pursued in a cross- continental manner, with the empowerment of women and youth, and the priorities of small island developing States (SIDS), least developed countries (LDCs) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) addressed in a cross-cutting manner.

52. All of these efforts will be carried out through international partnerships.

V. Recommendations

53. The Assembly is invited to:

a) Take note of the progress in the implementation of the action plan for marine scientific research in support of the UN Ocean Decade;

²⁹ <https://deepseatrident.eu>

³⁰ <https://deepseatrident.eu> ;

<https://www.jpi-oceans.eu/en/ecological-aspects-deep-sea-mining>; <https://smartexccz.org> ;

Jones, D.O.B., Arias, M.B., Van Audenhaege, L. et al. Long-term impact and biological recovery in a deep-sea mining track. *Nature* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-025-08921-3>

b) Request the Secretary-General to continue her efforts to develop initiatives to advance research, mobilize know-how and resources through partnerships, in line with the next steps outlined earlier;

c) Encourage all members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific, and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations, and private persons to take up an active role in advancing these efforts.