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**Report of the Secretary-General on the
implementation of the decision of the Council in
2025 relating to the reports of the Chair of the
Legal and Technical Commission**

Implementation of the decision of the Council in 2025 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. At its 312th meeting, on 8 November 2023, the Council of the International Seabed Authority adopted a decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission ([ISBA/28/C/27](#)). In paragraph 19 of the decision, the Council requested that annual reporting to it on the implementation of such decisions remain on its agenda as a standing item.
2. At its 339th meeting, on 21 July 2025, the Council adopted a decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Commission ([ISBA/30/C/19](#)), in which it requested the Secretary-General and the Commission to undertake a series of specific actions.
3. Furthermore, at its 354th meeting, on 19 March 2026, the Council adopted a decision relating to the report of the Legal and Technical Commission on the implementation of the Council's decision relating to a request of additional information from contactors at risk of non-compliance with their contractual obligations ([ISBA/30/C/19](#)) ([ISBA/31/C/18](#)).
4. Part II of the present report provides information on the measures taken by the Secretary-General in response to specific requests made by the Council in its decision [ISBA/30/C/19](#). Part III further sets out information on the actions undertaken by the Secretary-General pursuant to Council decision [ISBA/31/C/18](#). Part IV provides an update on the status of the voluntary trust funds established to support the participation of developing States in the meetings of the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee.

II. Actions taken by the Secretary-General regarding decision ISBA/30/C/19

5. In paragraph 4 of its decision of 21 July 2025, the Council requested the Secretary-General to name in the annual report the contractors requiring further continued attention regarding their performance and alignment with their contractual obligations, while noting that some reviews may not be completed.

6. In the annual report to the Assembly (ISBA/31/A/2), the Secretary-General has reported on the identification of contractors by the Legal and Technical Commission requiring continued attention regarding their performance and alignment with their contractual obligations.

7. In paragraph 6 of its decision, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue the practice of communicating the various issues identified during the Commission's review of contractors' annual reports to the relevant contractors and sponsoring States, to follow up in writing with those contractors that repeatedly perform insufficiently or incompletely against an approved plan of work or that have indicated that the implementation of the plan of activities will be made conditional on external factors regardless of the applicable contractual requirements, to request meetings with them and to write to the respective sponsoring States to bring that issue to their attention and request a meeting with the sponsoring States to address it and to provide relevant information to the Council.

8. By the end of August 2025, the Secretary-General had conveyed to individual contractors, and copied to their respective sponsoring States, the comments and recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission following the Commission's evaluation of their annual reports. The contractors included their responses to the Commission's comments in their annual reports for 2025, which will be reviewed by the Commission during the second part of the thirty-first session.

9. In addition, at the beginning of September 2025, the Secretary-General had conveyed to the nine identified contractors requiring specific attention, and copied to their respective sponsoring States, the Commission's comments and questions with a view to undertaking a review of the responses provided in 2026 (see paragraph 10 of ISBA/30/C/4/Add.1). These contractors were invited to respond to those questions no later than 30 November 2025. During its meeting in the first part of the 31st Session, the Commission reviewed responses from the nine contractors identified and agreed to transmit additional questions to the relevant contractors, requesting that all written responses be submitted to the Secretariat by 31 May 2026.

10. In paragraph 8 of its decision, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Council on an annual basis the instances of alleged non-compliance and regulatory action in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982¹ and the regulations on prospecting and exploration, identified by the Commission, inter alia taking into account the results of the Secretary-General's consultations with contractors.

11. The Secretary-General will report to the Council on any instances of alleged non-compliance identified by the Legal and Technical Commission during its meetings held in the second part of the thirty-first session.

12. In paragraph 9 of its decision, the Council also requested the Secretary-General to require, in accordance with section 10.3 of the standard clauses for exploration

¹ Ibid., vol.1836, No.31364.

contracts, additional information from contractors at risk of non-compliance with their contractual obligations, in particular with sections 13 and 27 of the standard clauses, further requested the Secretary-General to forward that information to the Legal and Technical Commission for its consideration, and requests the Commission to report and make appropriate recommendations to the Council during the first part of its thirty-first session on the outcome of the inquiry.

13. In a circular dated 15 January 2026, and pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Council's decision, the Secretary-General requested all contractors to provide the relevant information by 10 February 2026. As at 13 February 2026, the Secretariat had received responses from all 21 contractors. The Secretary-General subsequently transmitted the information to the Legal and Technical Commission for its consideration during its meetings held in the first part of the thirty-first session.

14. In paragraph 12 of its decision, the Council requested the Secretary-General to negotiate with contractors robust and comprehensive capacity-building programmes covering different aspects of deep-sea mineral exploration activities, with particular emphasis on the practical and technical elements of deep-sea mineral exploration activities, and to ensure that such programmes are needs-based, transparent and designed to facilitate the meaningful participation of developing States, including through access to data and equipment necessary for implementation of such capacity-building programmes.

15. The Secretary-General since July 2025 has successfully renegotiated all training placements in line with the request of the Council. Since then, sixty-two candidates have been selected through the competitive selection process by the Legal and Technical Commission and include: thirteen internships covering environmental/biological aspects of deep-sea mining (includes laboratory work and practical onboard training) and deep-sea technology; twenty-two fellowships of which seventeen were for master's programme in the field of marine scientific research or relevant to the responsible exploration and management of deep-sea mineral resources; sixteen placements covering a mix of theoretical, engineering, dredging and law of the sea summer academy; and eleven for at-sea onboard training to various contract areas. The Secretary-General will continue working with developing member States, including those from least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS), through their nominated capacity building focal points, to ensure that the priority needs are kept current and at the forefront when negotiating with contractors. Developing Member States who have not done so, are therefore strongly encouraged to nominate national focal points with whom the secretariat will interact on these matters and thereby foster greater involvement of personnel from a wider cross section of developing States in keeping with article 15 of annex III to the Convention.

16. In paragraph 16 of its decision, regarding data management at the Authority, the Council requested the Secretary-General to explore options for securing the necessary resources and mobilizing support to enhance interconnection and interoperability with relevant global databases.

17. As of 26 May 2026, the Secretary-General has taken the following steps to enhance the interconnection and interoperability of the Authority's data systems with relevant global databases. The Authority has continued to advance its partnership with the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) network of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in its capacity as an Associate Data Unit. In furtherance of this collaboration, the Authority has uploaded its most recent environmental data inventory to the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS) network for integration with other taxonomic sources. The OBIS-ISA

node now contains over 200,000 occurrence records spanning approximately 3,000 taxa across 158 datasets, reflecting the breadth and depth of the Authority's environmental data holdings.

18. Further to these efforts, the Authority has joined the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS), a global network of interconnected platforms designed to enhance the accessibility, interoperability and discoverability of ocean data. This collaboration, coordinated by IODE of IOC-UNESCO, represents a meaningful advancement in international cooperation for ocean research and the sustainable management of marine resources. Through the integration of DeepData, into the ODIS framework, critical environmental and scientific data collected by exploration contractors will be rendered more accessible to researchers, policymakers and stakeholders worldwide. Notably, the extensive records of DeepData, including over 800 Conductivity, Temperature and Depth (CTD) sampling stations in the deep seabed, are now discoverable through IODE's Ocean InfoHub, thereby broadening the reach and utility of the data assets of the Authority on a global scale.

III. Actions taken by the Secretary-General regarding the Council decision ISBA/31/C/18

19. In paragraph 5 of its decision ISBA/31/C/18, the Council requested the Secretary-General to request Sponsoring States whose sponsored contractors are identified by the Commission in accordance with Decision ISBA/30/C/19 to provide additional information on:

- a. How they intend to ensure that their sponsored contractors comply with all applicable obligations under the Convention, and
- b. The measures they will take to ensure that the exclusive exploration rights of the contractors remain within the limits of the Convention and of the Authority's mandate.

20. On 18 May 2026, the Secretary-General requested the relevant Sponsoring States to provide the additional information referred to above by 15 June 2026. The information received will be submitted to the Legal and Technical Commission for their consideration.

IV. Status of contributions to the voluntary trust fund to support the participation of members of the Commission

21. In paragraph 18 of its decision ISBA/30/C/19, the Council called for contributions to the voluntary trust funds to support participation in the meetings of the Authority by developing States, including in the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to report on the amount available in each fund at the start and end of each reporting period, as well as a breakdown, by trust fund, of countries that have contributed and of the countries that have received support from the funds.

22. The amount available in each fund at the start and end of the reporting period is shown in table 1.

Table 1
Amount available in the voluntary trust funds at the start and end of the reporting period

(United States dollars)

<i>Voluntary trust fund</i>	<i>Amount available at the start of the reporting period (1 April 2025)</i>	<i>Amount available at the end of the reporting period (31 March 2026)</i>
Council	15,794	13,909
Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee	29,939	(55,436)

23. The breakdown, by trust fund, of countries that have contributed and of the countries that have received support from the funds is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Countries that have contributed and have received support from the voluntary trust funds

<i>Voluntary Trust Fund Council</i>	
<i>Countries that have contributed</i>	<i>Countries that have received support</i>
Cyprus	Argentina
Italy	Bangladesh
Mauritius	Lesotho
Nauru	Mauritius
Portugal	Mexico
United Kingdom	Sierra Leone
	Tanzania
	Uganda
<i>Voluntary Trust Fund Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee</i>	
<i>Countries that have contributed</i>	<i>Countries that have received support</i>
China	Argentina
Cyprus	Brazil
India	Cameroon
Ireland	Chile
Mexico	Dominican Republic
United Kingdom	Fiji
	Ghana
	Indonesia
	Kenya
	Mexico
	Nauru
	Nigeria
	Philippines
	Sierra Leone
	Tanzania
	Togo
	Trinidad and Tobago
	Uganda

24. Owing to general increases in the cost of air tickets, the secretariat estimates that approximately \$60,000 will be needed to support the participation of all eligible members of the Council in the second part of the thirty-first session. For the meetings of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee in the second part of the thirty-first session, approximately \$110,000 is required.

• **V. Recommendation**

25. The Council is invited to take note of the present report and to provide such guidance as may be necessary.