



Part II of the 31st Session of the International Seabed Authority

Assembly

Statement on Agenda Item Number 9 – Annual Report of the Secretary-General

by

Madam Leticia Carvalho

Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority

Kingston, Jamaica, 31 July 2026.

Excellencies,

Distinguished ministers and delegates,

Colleagues,

In the interest of time, I will keep my remarks brief.

It was a distinct honor for me to present the Annual Report of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, contained in document ISBA/31/A/2 and submitted pursuant to article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Let me give you my full assurances that I have listened attentively to all your valuable interventions on this item.

I am very pleased by the consistent support of Member States regarding the substance of the Annual Report and your appreciation for the Secretariat's support to you. Your honest feedback gives confidence that we are moving in the right direction as well as providing clear areas to strengthen and build.

I have noted your nearly universal priorities around marine scientific research and capacity building, these crucial workstreams are both aspirations and mandates for the ISA. I often say that it is unique in human

history to require such high levels of safeguarding, training and evidence before an exploitation activity begins, and we must champion this principle and opportunity. The best way to bring this to practical effect is through these workstreams.

To this point, I am delighted to have been able to organize high level side events to showcase the accomplishments of the See Her Exceed Programme, the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative and to highlight the achievements of the African Academy of Deep Sea Diplomacy. These events are introducing all delegates to the donors and beneficiaries of this

cross-cutting work, which can in turn help to diversify geographic participation and increase resource mobilization.

On the topic of outreach, we are also very happy to have heard the enthusiastic remarks from Member States on how the International Day of the Deep Seabed is building ocean literacy and partnerships of action.

I have heard that you value the Authority's partnership building efforts, which we will continue to approach strategically to respond to Member State priorities, advance our mandate and equip the Secretariat, and all subsidiary bodies, with the most experienced thought leadership and

amplification opportunities towards ocean governance that we can leverage.

I have also heard the importance that delegations attach to ensuring coherence and complementarity between the work of the Authority and the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. The Secretariat will continue to advance this work, in full respect of the respective mandates, and to keep Member States informed of progress.

Many delegations also emphasized that the framework should be accompanied by continued strengthening of the Authority's institutional capacity. This is a priority that the Secretariat is already advancing through

efforts to strengthen its expertise, administrative systems and accountability arrangements, while enhancing its support to and coordination with the organs of the Authority. I welcome the guidance and reaffirm the importance of doing so.

Against this background, I also take this opportunity to thank the Finance Committee and the Council for their extensive and diligent work on the budget, and the Assembly for its approval of the budget for the financial period 2027–2028. The budget equips the Authority with the means to deliver on the priorities established by Member States under the

Convention in a transparent, efficient, professional and results-oriented manner.

Let me again clarify a few important points before I close.

I wish to reaffirm the Secretariat's full support for closer alignment with United Nations system standards in relation to audit and oversight. The United Nations Board of Auditors has been invited to participate in previous competitive selection processes and will again be invited to participate in the process for the next audit cycle.

Let me also confirm that no decision has been taken by the Administration to reclassify any established post at any duty station. Staffing actions will

continue to be undertaken in accordance with the applicable administrative instructions and in full respect of the number and classification of posts approved by this Assembly.

With respect to the 15 per cent transfer provision that has been raised by some delegations, I wish to recall that as in every biennium, the Secretariat will continue to strive to respect this requirement, together with all its obligations relating to sound financial management.

Allow me also to clarify the position regarding the Partnership Fund. Between 2022 and 2024, the previous administration decided not to make the authorized annual transfers from the Endowment Fund, in order to

preserve the invested capital and maximize the interest generated, while meeting the needs of the Partnership Fund through other means. This approach was reflected in the audits for those years and accepted by the Finance Committee. However, it did not follow the annual transfer schedule established by this Assembly.

Allow me to clarify, under the current administration, this position was corrected in 2025 through the payment of the outstanding USD 1.2 million for 2022–2024, together with the USD 400,000 authorized for 2025, for a total of USD 1.6 million.

This does not mean that more funds were withdrawn than had been authorized by the Assembly. It represents a correction of the previous practice and a return to the terms of the Assembly's decision. The final authorized transfer of USD 400,000 will be made in 2026 as per the guidance of the Assembly.

Let me close with deepest gratitude to you Member States, for your wisdom and valuable guidance. I also want to give my full appreciation to your leadership , Mr.President, over these proceedings.

I thank you.