



Council

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English only

Thirty-first session
Council session, part II
Kingston, 13–24 July 2026

Statement of the President on the work of the Council of the International Seabed Authority during the second part of the thirty-first session

I. Resumption of the session

1. At the 355th meeting of the Council, on 13 July 2026, the President for the thirty-first session, Mayank Joshi (India), opened the second part of the thirty-first session. The Council met from 13 to 24 July 2026 at the Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston, Jamaica. The Council held nineteen plenary meetings (355th to 373rd meetings) and 3 informal meetings.

II. Report of the Secretary-General on the credentials of members of the Council

2. At the 371st meeting, on 23 July 2026, under agenda item 5, the Secretary General presented the report on credentials of the members of the Council.¹ 33 Member States submitted formal credentials.

III. Election to fill vacancies on the Legal and Technical Commission

3. At its 365th meeting on 20 July 2026, under agenda item 6, the Council elected Mr. Aphary Muyongo (Namibia) to fill the current vacancy on the Legal and Technical Commission, after Mr. Paulus Kainge (Namibia) communicated his resignation,² and of Mr. Jonguk Kim (Republic of Korea) to fill the vacancy after the resignation of Dr. Se-Jong Ju (Republic of Korea),³ to serve the remainder of their terms ending on 31 December 2027.

¹ See ISBA/31/C/INF/2

² See ISBA/31/C/20

³ See ISBA/31/C/32

IV. Status of the contracts for exploration and related matters

4. At the 365th meeting, on 20 July 2026, the Council took up agenda item 7 and considered and took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration.⁴

Relinquishment of areas allocated under exploration contracts

5. At the same meeting, the Council took note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the relinquishment of one-third of the area allocated to the Government of the Republic of Korea under the contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts,⁵ and on the relinquishment of 75 per cent of the area allocated to the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) under the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides.⁶

V. Report of the Secretary-General on the status of national legislation relating to deep seabed mining and related matters

6. At its 365th meeting on 20 July 2026, under agenda item 8, the Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the laws, regulations and administrative measures adopted by sponsoring States and other members of the International Seabed Authority with respect to the activities in the Area, and related matters.⁷

VI. Consideration, with a view to approval, of applications for extension of a contract for exploration

7. At its 366th meeting, on 20 July 2026, the Council took up agenda item 10. Acting on the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, the Council approved the applications for an extension of the contracts for exploration of the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of the Federal Republic of Germany,⁸ Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.,⁹ and China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association.¹⁰

VII. Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area

8. At its 355th session, on 13 July 2026, the Council took up agenda item 11, consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area (“Draft Regulations”). All subsequent discussions on the Draft Regulations were open to participation by members of the Authority and observers.

⁴ See ISBA/31/C/3/Add.1.

⁵ See ISBA/31/C/30.

⁶ See ISBA/31/C/31.

⁷ See ISBA/31/C/21.

⁸ See application, ISBA/31/C/25, and decision of the Council, ISBA/31/C/35.

⁹ See application ISBA/31/C/26, and the decision of the Council, ISBA/31/C/36.

¹⁰ See application, ISBA/31/C/27, and decision of the Council, ISBA/31/C/37.

9. At the same meeting, and in line with the Statement of the President,¹¹ paragraph 43, the President presented the third version (Revision 3) of the Further Revised Consolidated Text of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.¹² Additionally, at the same meeting, pursuant to decision of the Council on a thematic approach,¹³ paragraph 5, the Secretary-General presented the updated draft indicative list of outstanding issues.¹⁴

10. At its 356th session, on 13 July 2026, the Council, guided by the President, turned to consideration of the draft exploitation regulations 97 bis to 101. On **draft regulation 97 bis**, several members supported streamlining the regulation and relocating certain provisions to the inspector's code of conduct, while retaining a reference to the treatment of confidential information. On **draft regulation 98**, delegates called for further streamlining and underscored the importance of distinguishing between enforcement and inspection functions, with further discussion required on the conduct of inspections without interference with contractor operations. On **draft regulation 99**, delegates considered the circumstances warranting oral or written instructions, and sought clarification on instructions relating to structural modifications, repairs, and suspension. Discussions on **draft regulation 100** addressed inspection timelines, the chain of transmission of reports, stakeholder commenting rights, and access to clarifications in the interest of administrative fairness. On **draft regulation 101**, several delegations expressed reservations regarding the establishment of an ombudsperson or independent complaints mechanism, noting that such functions may be performed by existing organs of the Authority, including the Council.

11. At its 358th, 359th and 361st meetings, held from 14 to 16 July 2026, the Council considered the **Annexes** to the Draft Regulations. Discussions covered the Environmental Impact Statement (Annex IV), including proposals to streamline the Annexes and cross-cutting environmental issues. On Annex X, many members identified **liability** as a key outstanding issue requiring a holistic approach, and Canada and Spain proposed establishing a working group, which they volunteered to facilitate. On Annex X bis, delegates discussed the relationship between environmental Impact Reference Zones (IRZs) and Preservation Reference Zones (PRZs). The Council also considered the **Schedule** of definitions and agreed that definitions within the mandate of existing informal groups would be referred to those groups, while further informal work could be undertaken on the remaining definitions.

12. On 15 July 2026, the Council held an informal meeting on the **Authority's working modalities**. Delegations discussed possible adaptations to existing modalities, including intersessional and virtual meetings and written procedures, while emphasizing the need for transparency, appropriate safeguards, the participation of developing countries, adequate resources and coordination among the organs of the Authority. It was also suggested that the Secretariat could prepare a briefing on how the Authority's working modalities may need to be adapted in preparation for the transition to exploitation.

13. At the 360th meeting, on 15 July 2026, the Friends of the President group on **Protection of Submarine Cables and Pipelines**, facilitated by Singapore, held a discussion, structured around guiding questions on draft regulations 31 and 31 bis. On draft regulation 31, there was broad support for the merged proposal, which allocates primary responsibility to the contractor to identify other uses and activities in the marine environment through due diligence. Divergent views were expressed on

¹¹ See ISBA/31/C/19/Rev.1.

¹² See ISBA/31/C/CRP.1/Rev.3.

¹³ See ISBA/30/C/18.

¹⁴ See ISBA/31/C/CRP.7.

whether the Authority “may” or “shall” cooperate with different entities to facilitate the exchange of information. On draft regulation 31 bis, delegations expressed differing preferences on the standard of protection.

14. At the same meeting, the Friends of the President Group on **Review of These Regulations** (draft regulation 107), facilitated by Belgium, held discussions. Delegations expressed divergent views on the scope and timing of the first review and were unable to reach consensus on the proposed review triggers or the inclusion of a backstop provision requiring a review no later than ten years after the adoption of the regulations.

15. On 16 July 2026, the Council discussed in an informal meeting, the issue of **non-confidentiality of environmental data**, as contained in paragraph 3(f) of draft regulation 89. Different views were expressed on the three alternative versions of the paragraph, with no delegation supporting the original wording. It was suggested that a better definition of “environmental data” should be provided. Some delegations supported the second alternative version, considering that it ensures the right to access environmental data while ensuring that such data remain confidential for a limited time period for academic purposes. The majority of delegations supported however the first alternative version, that does not provide any exception to the non-confidentiality of environmental data.

16. Also on the same day, the informal working group on the **Equalization Measure**, facilitated by Australia, held an informal meeting, during which Mr. Victor Kitange of the Commonwealth Secretariat delivered a presentation on the Tax Equalization Measure and provided an overview of the Additional Profit Share Model.

17. At the 362nd meeting, on 16 July 2026, the Friends of the President group on **System of Payments and Review of the Rates of Payments** (draft regulations 81 and 82), facilitated by Canada, continued its discussions on the definition and review of the system of payments. Delegations considered, inter alia, the treatment of environmental externalities and the application of changes to the system of payments to existing contracts, with several emphasizing the need for predictability and certainty. Support was expressed for developing a standard for the review of payment rates and for including a definition of “rates of payment” in the Schedule.

18. At the same meeting, the Friends of the President group on **monopolization**, facilitated by Trinidad and Tobago, continued its deliberations. Delegations supported including a general provision against monopolization in the draft regulations, with detailed substantive criteria to be addressed in the standards and guidelines. Discussions focused on preventing concentration of control, including in cases of changes of control or nationality, while some delegations sought clarification of relevant terminology. A regional group proposed amendments to ensure that both direct and indirect concentration of control, including through corporate groups and beneficial ownership, would be taken into account.

19. At the 363rd meeting, on 17 July 2026, the Informal Working Group on **Regional Environmental Management Plans (REMPs)**, facilitated by the Netherlands, presented the outcome of its intersessional work on draft regulations 44 bis and 58. Discussions focused on the standardized procedure for developing REMPs, their status during review, the prioritization of their development in areas where no REMP exists, and the implications of amendments to REMPs for existing plans of work. Several delegations emphasized that a REMP should be in place before the Commission considers an application for a plan of work.

20. At the same meeting, the Informal Working Group on **Environmental Management and Monitoring**, facilitated by Norway, continued its deliberations on

draft regulations 49 to 52, guided by six questions covering the scope of the environmental management and monitoring plan (EMMP), whether to adopt a common defined term for binding environmental documents, cumulative environmental effects, environmental risk, the relationship between the end of the contract period and completion of the closure plan, and progressive closure. The facilitator noted that further intersessional work would be needed and that the issue remains outstanding.

21. At its 364th meeting, on 17 July 2026, the Council considered the outstanding issue of **Whistleblowing Protections**. The report of the Secretary-General¹⁵ proposed a draft general policy applicable across the Authority on whistleblowing and protection against retaliation. Delegations broadly agreed that whistleblowing should be addressed through an institutional policy rather than the exploitation regulations, with several supporting possible cooperation with the United Nations Ethics Office. A regional group proposed amendments to the draft policy, including the establishment of an independent ethics function within the Authority.

22. At the same meeting, the Council considered **Effective Control**. Canada and the Netherlands presented a draft standard proposing a factual approach based on the ability to direct a contractor's operational conduct and compliance. Several delegations supported the draft as a basis for further work, while seeking greater clarity on its relationship with sponsorship obligations, the effective participation of developing States and the application of the proposed assessment criteria.

23. On 20 July 2026, the Informal Working Group on Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE), facilitated by Norway, held an informal meeting on the draft decision on the **Establishment of a Compliance Committee**. Divergent views were expressed on the timing of its establishment, with several delegations distinguishing between establishment and operationalization. One delegation proposed agreeing in principle to establish the Committee, while requesting further consideration of the administrative and financial implications by the Finance Committee. Broad support was expressed for a mandate covering both exploration and exploitation activities, while several delegations emphasized the need to clearly distinguish the respective mandates of the Compliance Committee and the Legal and Technical Commission.

24. At the 367th meeting, on 21 July 2026, the Informal Working Group on **Test Mining and Pilot Mining**, co-facilitated by Belgium, China and Germany, presented the outcome of its intersessional work. The co-facilitators recalled that test mining would take place during exploration, while pilot mining would occur during exploitation before commercial production. Delegations discussed the objectives and requirements of both phases, including possible exemptions from test mining, while no substantive support emerged for exemptions from pilot mining. Divergent views remained on several issues, with delegations calling for further conceptual clarification.

25. At the same meeting, the Informal Working Group on **Closure Plans**, facilitated by Fiji, presented a joint proposal with Norway to streamline the closure plan regulations by integrating closure planning into the Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan (EMMP), while retaining a separate closure plan before the cessation of commercial production. Several delegations supported the restructuring, while emphasizing the need for measurable closure objectives, clarity on post-closure monitoring and alignment with regional environmental management plans.

26. At the 368th meeting, on 21 July 2026, the Friends of the President group on **Compliance and Enforcement Measures** (draft regulations 103 to 105), facilitated

¹⁵ See ISBA/31/C/CRP.9.

by the Netherlands, discussed emergency orders and remedial actions. On emergency orders, delegations considered a revised proposal allowing the Compliance Committee to refer urgent situations to the Legal and Technical Commission and issue temporary emergency measures. Several delegations supported the approach, while seeking greater clarity on the respective mandates of the Committee, the Commission and the Council. On remedial actions, the facilitator proposed that the Authority be able to require a contractor to undertake such actions and provide for their undertaking by other contractors.

27. On 22 July 2026, the Friends of the President Group on **Potentially Polluting Wrecks**, facilitated by Spain, held an informal meeting on a proposal for a new draft regulation on potentially polluting wrecks (PPWs) in the Area. Several delegations supported addressing the issue in the exploitation regulations, emphasizing its basis in article 145 of the Convention, while some suggested incorporating it within the provisions on incidents. Delegations also highlighted the need to take into account relevant international instruments and the work of the International Maritime Organization.

28. At the 369th meeting, on 22 July 2026, the Informal Working Group on **Rights and Interests of Coastal States**, co-facilitated by Portugal and Singapore, discussed draft regulations 4 and 93 bis. Most delegations supported retaining the reference to “coastal States” without qualification, consistent with article 142 of the Convention, and favored requiring contractors to “consult” rather than “engage” potentially affected coastal States throughout the exploitation contract. Discussions also addressed the scope and timing of consultations and the relationship between draft regulations 4 and 93 bis.

29. At the same meeting, the Informal Working Group on **Underwater Cultural Heritage**, co-facilitated by the Federated States of Micronesia, Greece and Brazil, discussed draft regulation 35. Delegations expressed differing views on whether to refer to “underwater cultural heritage” or to “objects and sites of an archaeological or historical nature”, as reflected in the Convention, and on the proposed definitions. Discussions also addressed references to intangible underwater cultural heritage, venerated sites and cultural rights, with some delegations seeking further clarity on their definitions and legal basis.

30. On 22 July 2026, an informal meeting was held by the Friends of the President Group on the **Seabed Mining Register** (draft regulation 92), facilitated by India, considered a consolidated text proposal developed through intersessional work. Delegations discussed the information to be included in the register, including information on contractors, exploitation contracts, environmental performance guarantees, incidents, mining discharges, payments and closure plans. Several textual refinements were proposed to improve clarity and consistency, with broad support expressed for the term “Mining Discharges”.

Further work on the draft exploitation regulations

31. At its 373rd meeting, on 24 July 2026, under agenda item 11, the Council adopted the decision on the approach to the continuation of the elaboration of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation and resolution of the remaining key outstanding issues.¹⁶ In that decision, the Council requested the Secretariat, inter alia, to draft a road map and share it by 31 October 2026, setting out milestones for the timely adoption of the rules, regulations and procedures, and to provide an advanced negotiating text, which harmonizes and streamlines the further revised consolidated text,¹⁷ and takes into account discussions and outcomes achieved during

¹⁶ See ISBA/31/C/38.

¹⁷ See ISBA/31/C/CRP.1/Rev.3.

the thirty-first session as well as subsequent intersessional input, and upload it to the website of the Authority at least six weeks in advance of the first part of the thirty-second session. In that regard, the Council endorsed the proposal of the President to establish **1 October 2026** as the deadline for the submission of written proposals and comments by individual delegations. With respect to informal working groups and Friends of the President groups, the Council endorsed the proposal by the President to establish **25 November 2026** as the deadline for the submission of written proposals and comments.

VIII. 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

32. At its 365th meeting, on 20 July 2026, under agenda item 12, the Council took note of the 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.¹⁸

IX. Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the second part of its thirty-first session

33. At its 357th meeting, on 14 July 2026, under agenda item 13, the Council considered and took note of the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the second part of its thirty-first session.¹⁹ In the same meeting the Chair of the Commission delivered an oral report to the Council.

34. Many delegations expressed appreciation to the Chair and members of the Commission for the considerable work undertaken during the second part of the thirty-first session and throughout the intersessional period. Delegations reaffirmed the importance of preserving the independence, integrity and scientific expertise of the Commission and emphasized the need to provide adequate administrative, legal and technical support to enable it to discharge its expanding mandate effectively.

35. With regard to contractor-related matters, many delegations welcomed improvements in the implementation of training programmes, including the ISA Capacity-Building Portal and initiatives promoting the participation of women in deep-sea research. Delegations also welcomed the review of the annual reports of the contractors by the Commission, while emphasizing the need for full compliance with contractual obligations, including the timely submission of complete technical and environmental data. Several delegations welcomed the additional clarification regarding procedures relating to contract extensions, inadequate performance and possible non-compliance, while emphasizing due process and the independence of the Commission, including in light of ongoing proceedings before the Seabed Disputes Chamber.

36. With respect to applications for extensions of exploration contracts, several delegations welcomed the recommendations of the Commission and acknowledged its detailed assessment. Some delegations noted that the continuing absence of exploitation regulations had affected the exploration activities by the contractors and

¹⁸ See ISBA/31/C/24.

¹⁹ See ISBA/31/C/4/Add.2.

investment decisions and suggested that further guidance from the Council could assist the Commission pending adoption of the exploitation regulations.

37. Many delegations welcomed progress on environmental threshold values and regional environmental management plans, including the draft regional environmental management plan for the Northwest Pacific Ocean. Delegations expressed particular appreciation for the dialogues between members of the Commission and the Council on environmental thresholds and regional environmental management plans, considering that these exchanges enhanced transparency, accountability and mutual understanding. Delegations encouraged the Commission to continue such engagement and emphasized that its environmental work should remain based on the best available scientific evidence.

38. Regarding standards and guidelines, many delegations welcomed the updated consolidated list by the Commission and supported a phased and outcomes-based approach guided by strategic direction from the Council. Delegations also welcomed progress in strengthening the data management systems of the Authority, including the independent review of DeepData. Throughout the discussion, delegations emphasized the increasing demands placed on the Commission and the importance of ensuring adequate resources and support to enable it to discharge its functions effectively while fully respecting its independence.

Decision on the report of the Chair of the Commission

39. At its 373rd session, on 24 July 2026, under agenda item 13, the Council adopted the decision relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission.²⁰

X. Report of the interim Director General of the Enterprise (item 14 of the agenda, Monday 20 July 2026)

40. At its 365th, on 20 July 2026, under agenda item 14, the interim Director-General of the Enterprise presented his annual report on activities undertaken in performing the functions of the Enterprise as specified in Section 2 of the Annex to the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982.²¹ The Council took note of the report.

41. Many delegations expressed appreciation to the Interim Director General of the Enterprise for his comprehensive report and commended the progress achieved during the reporting period, particularly in light of the limited resources available to him. Delegations reaffirmed the important role of the Enterprise within the regime established by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, including in giving effect to the principle of the common heritage of humankind and facilitating the participation of developing States in activities in the Area. Many delegations welcomed the participation of the Enterprise in the negotiations on the draft exploitation regulations, its preparatory work on administrative and managerial arrangements, its monitoring of market and technological developments, and its capacity-building, technology-transfer and outreach activities. Several delegations emphasized the importance of ensuring that the future regulatory framework appropriately reflect the particular legal status and mandate of the Enterprise.

42. A number of delegations attached particular importance to the regime of reserved areas and expressed concern regarding reported overlaps between areas reserved for the Enterprise and applications or activities pursued outside the legal

²⁰ See ISBA/31/C/34.

²¹ See ISBA/31/C/23 – ISBA/31/A/6.

framework established by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Delegations emphasized the importance of preserving the integrity and availability of reserved areas, the multilateral character of the regime for the Area and the future capacity of the Enterprise and developing States to participate effectively in activities in the Area.

43. Many delegations also welcomed the consideration of the Interim Director General of possible joint venture arrangements, while emphasizing that such arrangements should be consistent with the applicable legal framework and sound commercial principles, remain subject to the appropriate oversight of the Council, and promote capacity-building, technology transfer and meaningful participation by developing States. Some delegations called for further consideration of the meaning of sound commercial principles and for clearer information on the steps and milestones towards the progressive operationalization of the Enterprise.

44. Delegations generally supported the continued, progressive preparation of the Enterprise for its future independent operation, while expressing different views on the pace and modalities of its operationalization. Some delegations considered certain measures premature pending further progress on the exploitation regulations, while others called for more tangible and time-bound steps towards operational readiness. Several delegations emphasized that future activities of the Enterprise should be transparent, financially sustainable and consistent with robust environmental standards and the best available scientific evidence. Delegations also encouraged continued reporting to the Council on operational planning, financing, partnerships and other preparatory activities and expressed support for providing the Interim Director General with the resources and institutional support necessary to continue discharging his mandate effectively.

XI. Operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission

45. At its 366th and 373rd meetings, on 20 and 24 July 2026, respectively, under agenda item 15, the Council considered the draft decision of the Council on the election mechanisms of the members of the Economic Planning Commission.²² Following its consideration of the draft decision and the comments made by delegations, the Council agreed that further consultations were required with a view to reaching consensus on the matter.

46. A regional group expressed profound regret that the Council had again deferred consideration of the election mechanism for the Economic Planning Commission, emphasizing the importance of the Commission for implementing the common heritage of humankind principle and addressing the potential adverse effects of activities in the Area on developing countries, particularly land-based producers. While acknowledging the absence of consensus, the Group urged the Council to prioritize and finalize the matter during the first part of the thirty-second session and expressed its readiness to facilitate intersessional consultations together with Argentina, who offer to facilitate consultations.

47. At its 370th meeting, on 23 July 2026, under agenda item 15, based on the decision of the Council on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission of 2025,²³ paragraph 3, the Council took note of the financial implications and the most practical timelines for the Economic Planning Commission included in the report of the Finance Committee.²⁴

²² See ISBA/31/C/CRP.6.

²³ See ISBA/30/C/17.

²⁴ See ISBA/31/C/28-ISBA/31/A/10, section XII and Annex II.

XII. Report of the Finance Committee

48. At its 370th meeting on 23 July 2026, under agenda item 16, the Council considered the report and recommendations of the Finance Committee.²⁵ The Council took note of the report.

49. Many delegations expressed appreciation to the Chair and members of the Finance Committee for their comprehensive report and the considerable work undertaken during the session. Delegations reaffirmed the importance of the independent oversight role of the Committee in ensuring sound financial governance, transparency and accountability, and emphasized the need for timely and complete information and regular communication between the Secretariat and the Committee. Several delegations supported reinstating intersessional exchanges, making greater use of webinars and providing additional meeting time to enable the Committee to discharge its mandate effectively.

50. Delegations referred to aspects of budget implementation and financial and administrative management, including unspent programme resources, compliance with the 15 per cent limit on transfers between budget sections and programmes, the management of the funds of the Authority, and staffing and personnel expenditures. Particular attention was given to post reclassifications and temporary appointments, with several delegations emphasizing that decisions of the Assembly and applicable procedures should be fully respected. Delegations also referred to the financial implications of ongoing staff-related proceedings and generally supported a dedicated budget line for such expenditures and strengthened audit coverage, including possible engagement with auditors from the United Nations system.

51. A regional group requested further information on the use of the Endowment and Partnership Funds, personnel actions, staff-related proceedings and unimplemented programme activities, and stressed that the Finance Committee should receive complete and timely information while maintaining its functional independence. It also emphasized the importance of adequate resources for the participation of developing States, the Enterprise and the Economic Planning Commission and reaffirmed its confidence in the Finance Committee.

52. With respect to the proposed budget for 2027–2028, delegations generally recognized the need to provide the Authority with adequate resources to fulfil its mandate, while emphasizing fiscal discipline and an evolutionary approach linked to the actual development of its functions. Many delegations welcomed the reduction by the Finance Committee of the initial budget proposal, although several considered that the revised increase remained significant and called for further efficiencies. Delegations also reiterated the importance of Member States paying assessed contributions in full and on time and expressed concern regarding the financial situation of voluntary trust funds supporting the participation of developing States.

53. Several delegations addressed the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits arising from activities in the Area and the development of the Common Heritage Fund. While recognizing the Fund as a possible mechanism, delegations emphasized that other options for equitable benefit-sharing should also receive appropriate consideration. In this regard, a delegation proposed that the equitable distribution of financial benefits be included as a separate item on the agenda of the Council to allow Member States to consider the available mechanisms in greater depth, a proposal that received support from several delegations.

54. The Secretary-General thanked delegations for their comments and assured the Council that the Secretariat had taken careful note of the issues raised and remained

²⁵ See ISBA/31/C/28 – ISBA/31/A/10.

committed to close cooperation with the Finance Committee. She highlighted continued work on capacity-building, environmental and scientific activities and benefit-sharing, welcomed engagement with the United Nations Board of Auditors, and indicated that the Secretariat would provide further information, including on staffing and ongoing staff-related cases, together with a roadmap for improved engagement with the Finance Committee. The Secretary-General also clarified that, during the 2025–2026 biennium, no established post had been reclassified without Assembly approval and no transfer between budget sections, subsections or programmes had exceeded the 15 per cent limit, and reaffirmed the commitment of the Secretariat to transparency, regular dialogue and cooperation with all organs of the Authority.

XIII. Budget of the International Seabed Authority

55. At its 371st and 373rd meetings, on 23 and 24 July 2026, respectively, under agenda item 17, the Council considered the proposed budget of the Authority for the financial period 2027–2028.²⁶ On the basis of the recommendations of the Finance Committee,²⁷ the Council formulated its recommendations to the Assembly and adopted the decision relating to the budget of the International Seabed Authority for the financial period 2027–2028.²⁸

XIV. Adoption of the scale of assessment for contributions to the budget of the International Seabed Authority for the financial period 2027–2028

56. At its 371st and 373rd meetings, on 23 and 24 July 2026, respectively, the Council agreed to consider agenda item 18, adoption of the scale of assessment for contributions to the budget of the International Seabed Authority for the financial period 2027–2028, under agenda item 17, as it was included in the recommendations of the Finance Committee report²⁹ and in the decision relating to the budget of the International Seabed Authority for the financial period 2027–2028.³⁰

XV. Dates of the next session

57. At its 373rd meeting, on 24 July 2026, under agenda item 20, the Council agreed on the dates for the first and second parts of the thirty-second session, as follows.

The first part: 8 to 19 March 2027; and

The second part: 12 to 23 July 2027.

The Council also considered the possibility of holding a third part of the session from 25 October to 5 November 2027, or alternatively from 25 October to 3 November 2027. As one delegation did not support holding a third part, no agreement was reached in that regard. The matter will therefore remain subject to further consideration and decision by the Council.

²⁶ See ISBA/31/A/4-ISBA/31/C/22.

²⁷ See ISBA/31/C/28-ISBA/31/A/10.

²⁸ See ISBA/31/C/33.

²⁹ See ISBA/31/C/28-ISBA/31/A/10.

³⁰ See ISBA/31/C/33.

XV. Other Matters

58. At its 355th meeting, on 13 July 2026, under agenda item 21, the secretariat briefed the Council and introduced the report on the status of the proceedings before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.³¹

59. At the same meeting, under agenda item 21, the Council was invited to consider a third part of the thirty-first session. The Council did not reach an agreement on this matter.

XVI. End of the thirty-first session

60. The second part of the thirty-first session of the Council was adjourned at midnight on 24 July 2026.

³¹ See ISBA/31/C/29.