

CONTRIBUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GA RESOLUTION 79/144 'OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA'

For Submission June 2025

Pursuant to United Nations [General Assembly Resolution 79/144](#) of 12 December 2024, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, the following information constitutes the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)’s contribution to the Secretary-General’s report for the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. This report highlights how ITU has implemented relevant provisions of resolution 79/144, with specific operative paragraphs of that resolution referenced where applicable ITU consents to this contribution being made available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

INTRODUCTION

The Union plays a key role in ocean affairs through its mandate over global ICT networks and standards. Reliable telecommunication is essential for maritime activities ranging from navigation and safety communications to scientific observation and emergency response. ITU’s work supports ocean governance by enabling resilient submarine cable infrastructure that underpins global connectivity; setting technical standards (radio and digital) that ensure dependable maritime communications and navigation services; enhancing maritime safety systems (such as the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System) and emergency alerting; addressing emerging cyber and electronic risks to maritime and undersea ICT infrastructure; and promoting satellite-based monitoring, remote sensing, and data exchange capabilities for ocean science, environmental monitoring and disaster management. These efforts are undertaken in cooperation with other agencies and stakeholders, and with attention to capacity-building for developing States, consistent with the calls in UNGA resolution 79/144 to strengthen international collaboration in ocean affairs.

ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING ADOPTION OF MEASURES, DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMMES WHICH HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN OR ARE ONGOING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC PROVISION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 79/144

II. Marine Science

*Pursuant to **OP 298**, which “stresses the importance of increasing the scientific understanding of the oceans-atmosphere interface, including through participation in ocean observing programmes and geographic information systems, such as the Global Ocean Observing System, sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Science Council, particularly considering their role in monitoring and forecasting climate change and variability, in supporting Earth system prediction¹⁵² and in the establishment and operation of tsunami warning systems”*

The Joint Task Force on Smart Cable Systems (JTF), established in 2012 by ITU, UNESCO-IOC and WMO, is actively promoting marine scientific research by integrating environmental

sensors into submarine telecommunication cables (dual-purpose cables). This innovative seabed infrastructure will help detect seismic events, contribute to early warning systems for tsunamis and natural disasters, and monitor the climate change from deep sea water temperature.

The JTF brings together governments, industry and scientific organizations, in line with UNCLOS provisions calling for enhanced international cooperation in marine research and technology development, with ongoing projects such as Atlantic CAM (Portugal), which connects Portugal mainland to Azores and Madeira as well as TamTam Science Project (Vanuatu and New Caledonia).

In order to progress the discussion and exchange information among experts, JTF regularly holds workshops and meetings. In particular, it held workshops collocating with PTC in Honolulu in January (2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025).

The JTF is also contributing to development of international standards. The first standard on SMART Cables (Recommendation ITU-T G.9730.2) and on dedicated scientific sensing submarine cable system (Recommendation ITU-T G.9730.1) have been approved in August 2024 by ITU-T Study Group 15, which develops standards on networks, technologies and infrastructures for transport, access and home. The work on "impact assessment framework for evaluating how ICT-based subsea infrastructure could support climate, environmental and biodiversity monitoring in the oceans" is ongoing within ITU-T Study Group 5, which works on Environment, EMF, climate action & circular economy.

VIII. Maritime safety and security and flag State implementation

*Pursuant to **OP 118**, which “Recognizes the crucial role of international cooperation at the global, regional, subregional and bilateral levels in combating, in accordance with international law, threats to maritime security, including piracy, armed robbery against ships at sea and terrorist acts against shipping, offshore installations, submarine cables and pipelines and other critical infrastructure and maritime interests, through bilateral and multilateral instruments and mechanisms aimed at monitoring, preventing and responding to such threats, the enhanced sharing of information among States relevant to the detection, prevention and suppression of such threats, and the prosecution of offenders with due regard to national legislation, and the need for sustained capacity-building to support such objectives, and in this regard welcomes activities related to maritime security under the thirty-first Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, held on 27 July 2024”*

*Pursuant to **OP 139**, which “Urges all States, in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization and other relevant international organizations and agencies, to improve the protection of offshore installations, submarine cables and pipelines and other critical infrastructure by adopting measures related to the prevention, reporting and investigation of acts of violence against such infrastructure, in accordance with international law, and by*

implementing such measures through national legislation to ensure proper and adequate enforcement”

*Pursuant to **OP 170**, which “Recognizes that submarine cables and pipelines are vitally important to the global economy and the national security of all States, conscious that these cables and pipelines are susceptible to intentional and accidental damage, and calls upon States to take measures to protect submarine cables and pipelines and to fully address issues relating to these cables and pipelines, in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Convention”*

*Pursuant to **OP 171**, which “Encourages greater dialogue and cooperation among States and the relevant regional and global organizations through workshops and seminars on the protection, and laying and maintenance of submarine cables and pipelines to promote the security of such critical infrastructure”*

*Pursuant to **OP 172**, which “encourages the adoption by States of laws and regulations necessary to provide that the breaking or injury, or conduct calculated or likely to result in such breaking or injury, of submarine cables or pipelines beneath the high seas done wilfully or through culpable negligence shall be a punishable offence, and further calls upon States to enforce such laws against ships flying their flag or a person subject to their jurisdiction, in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Convention”*

*Pursuant to **OP 173**, which “affirms the importance of the laying and maintenance, including the repair, of submarine cables and pipelines, undertaken in conformity with international law, as reflected in the Convention, and calls upon States to refrain from impeding the laying or maintenance of submarine cables and pipelines in a manner contrary to the provisions of the Convention, and to respect the relevant rights and duties of coastal States in the relevant maritime zones in this regard, as reflected in the Convention”*

In November 2024, ITU, in partnership with the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC), launched the [**International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience**](#), which aims to enhance the resilience of the global submarine cable network by pooling technical expertise, best practices and collaboration across different stakeholders. The Advisory Body includes 42 members from both the public and private sectors. These include representatives from submarine cable operators, telecommunications companies, equipment suppliers as well as service providers, government agencies responsible for digital infrastructure and international organizations.

It specifically addresses issues such as improving cable maintenance, preventing damage from natural hazards and human activities, ensuring faster recovery times after disruptions, increase redundancy and promoting sustainable practices in the industry. In addition, it works to help strengthen cooperation between countries and companies to protect this vital infrastructure that underpins global communications and the digital economy.

Five intergovernmental organizations have a consultative role within the Body: FAO, IMO, UNIDIR, UNDOALOS and UNODC.

On 26-27 February 2025, the International Submarine Cable Resilience Summit was held in Abuja, Nigeria, bringing together the global community to address critical technical issues related to submarine cable resilience. It also marked the first in-person gathering of the Advisory Body members. The event provided a platform to deepen dialogue and generate actionable strategies to ensure the resilience of submarine cable systems worldwide.

The agenda included:

- High-level panels on topics such as submarine cable resilience, legal and regulatory frameworks, technological innovation and crisis recovery strategies.
- Private sessions for International Advisory Body members and focal points to discuss strategic priorities and working methods.
- Interactive workshops to foster collaboration and actionable solutions.
- A [Summit Declaration](#) outlining collective commitments to safeguarding submarine cable systems and ensuring global connectivity.

During May 2025, three working groups were established by the Advisory Body to focus on key areas that are critical to strengthening global submarine cable resilience.

- WG1: Timely Deployment & Repair
- WG2: Risk Identification, Monitoring & Mitigation
- WG3: Fostering Connectivity & Geographic Diversity

These working groups, with a total of more than 160 expert members nominated by governments, industry, academia, and international organizations, represent a diverse cross-section of global stakeholders. Each working group is co-led by two appointed facilitators and is tasked with producing an action-oriented report or other deliverables by early 2026. These reports will include concrete recommendations and best practices aimed at enhancing the resilience of submarine cable infrastructure worldwide.