



Contribution to the Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, as mandated by United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/248 of 30 December 2022, entitled “Oceans and the Law of the Sea”.

14 June 2024

Twenty-eighth session in 2023 and the ongoing twenty-ninth session

1. The twenty-eighth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held from 24 to 28 July 2023 in Kingston, Jamaica.¹ In 2024, the Assembly meetings for the twenty-ninth session will be held in Kingston from 29 July to 2 August 2024.
2. Under its twenty-eighth session, the Assembly approved eight applications for observer status; the Secretary-General presented the fourth edition of his Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research to Rima Browne (Cook Islands), for her contribution to mapping the seabed; the Secretary General presented his annual report “*Just and Equitable Management of the Common Heritage of Humankind*”; the Assembly took note of the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023 and approved to extend it for 2 more years; the Assembly also approved the signing of two memoranda of understanding with the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC) and with the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt for the establishment of a joint regional training and research centre; and it approved the amendments to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission.
3. The twenty-eighth session of the Council was held in three parts, the first part was held from 16 to 31 March 2023, the second part from 10 to 21 July 2023, and the third part from 30 October to 8 November 2023, in line with the road maps endorsed by the Council at its meetings in November 2022² and July 2023³.
4. Under its twenty-eighth session, the Council made significant progress in the negotiation of the draft regulations for mineral exploitation in the Area; it approved an agreement of cooperation with the International Labour Organization; and in December 2023, the

¹ See [ISBA/28/A/18](#).

² See [ISBA/27/C/21/Add.2 Annex II](#).

³ See [ISBA/28/C/24](#).

Authority announced the appointment of the new Interim Director-General of the Enterprise⁴ within the Secretariat. Following an international recruitment process, Mr. Eden Charles, of Trinidad and Tobago, was appointed to this position and will present his first report to the Council in July 2024.

5. As per the roadmap agreed by Council Members in July 2023⁵, the first part of the twenty-ninth session of the Council was held from 18 to 29 March 2024. The Council will hold the second part of the twenty-ninth session from 15 to 26 July 2024.

Status of exploration contracts

6. As of 14 June 2024, a total of 30 contracts for exploration are in force: 19 are for polymetallic nodules, 7 for polymetallic sulphides, and 4 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. Each contractor is required to submit an annual report to the Secretary-General within 90 days from the end of each calendar year, covering its programme of activities in the exploration area. On 18 January 2024, the Authority received two new applications for approval of plans of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides⁶ and for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts,⁷ respectively, submitted by the Earth System Science Organization-Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India.
7. Between July 2023 and June 2024, four periodic review reports were submitted, namely the periodic review of the implementation of the plans of work of: (a) Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, relating to its contract for exploration of cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts; (b) Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, relating to its contract for exploration of polymetallic nodules; (c) the Government of the Republic of Korea, relating to its contract for exploration of polymetallic sulphides; and (d) China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association, relating to its contract for exploration of cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. All these periodic reports are under evaluation, with an anticipated completion date of July 2024.
8. Since 2017, the Secretary-General has been holding annual consultative meetings with contractors. In 2023, the sixth annual consultation took place, from 22 to 24 October 2023, in collaboration with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. It was attended by 22 representatives of exploration contractors. The next annual consultation will be held in the Republic of Korea between 30 September and 2 October 2024.
9. The Authority's Legal and Technical Commission adopted modalities for facilitating an exchange of views with contractors at its meeting in March 2024.⁸

⁴ See [ISBA/28/C/10](#).

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ See [ISBA/29/LTC/2](#).

⁷ See [ISBA/29/LTC/3](#).

⁸ See [ISBA/29/LTC/6](#).

Consideration of the Draft Exploitation Regulations

10. During the reporting period, the priority of the Authority has been to progress the draft regulations for mineral exploitation in the Area. As agreed in 1994, the Authority's fundamental task is to establish a sound regulatory framework for both exploration and exploitation as activities in the Area progress. Although individual States Parties and observers in some cases, have expressed different positions regarding any possible future activities in the Area, the vast majority of States Parties have expressed their commitment to continue the negotiations in good faith, recognizing the need to work effectively and diligently towards a strong and comprehensive legal framework as mandated by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.
11. During its July meeting in 2023, the Council agreed on a timeline and road map for the continued work on the draft regulations for exploitation of mineral resources for the third part of the twenty-eighth session in 2023 and for the first and second parts of the twenty-ninth session of the Council in 2024⁹, with a view to their adoption during the thirtieth session of the Authority. The Council will assess the remaining work that might be needed prior to the adoption of the exploitation regulations at the end of the Council meetings to be held in July 2024, and consider a revised road map to that end.
12. A major step forward was the release in February 2024 of a revised and consolidated text of the draft regulations,¹⁰ under the authority of the President of the twenty-eighth session. This was in line with the agreed road map¹¹ and was designed to identify and remedy areas of overlap, duplication, and omission in what had become a very complex text. It also sought to harmonize the text both internally and with the language of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.
13. During the first part of the twenty-ninth session, the Council, under its new Presidency, began a complete reading of the consolidated text. The Council also considered several important thematic issues in informal working groups led by facilitators and rapporteurs. The intention of the Presidency is to continue that work in July 2024, with the aim of completing the entire text and avoiding repetition.
14. All discussions on the draft regulations have taken place in conditions of the utmost transparency. From the outset, the Council has held all discussions on the regulations in informal session, open to all members of the Authority and observers. At every stage, the Council has invited the broadest possible range of input into the development of the regulations, including in the form of written proposals. Over 1,500 written proposals have been submitted, all of which are published on the ISA website and incorporated into a compilation document.¹² The use of informal working groups has contributed greatly to the

⁹ See [ISBA/28/C/24](#).

¹⁰ The document is available at [Consolidated text.pdf](#) (isa.org.jm).

¹¹ See [ISBA/28/C/24](#).

¹² See [ISBA/29/C/CRP.3](#)

development of the text, especially on more technical matters such as the system for royalties and payments, underwater cultural heritage, mechanisms for stakeholder consultation, and the processes for environmental impact assessment. These groups are playing an important role in advancing the work and making efforts to find compromise solutions between the interested delegations.

15. The Authority appointed experts for the intersessional expert group to develop binding environmental threshold values, to contribute to the determination of what is required to ensure effective protection of the marine environment.¹³
16. The Finance Committee, which has the primary responsibility to draft appropriate rules and procedures on equitable benefit-sharing, during its meeting in July 2023 discussed a proposal for the establishment of the Common Heritage Fund, as an alternative or adjunct to the direct distribution of monetary benefits from activities in the Area. On the basis of a report of the Secretary-General,¹⁴ the Committee also discussed the options for the distribution of funds received under the Convention, article 82(4).

Development of Regional Environmental Management Plans

17. In order to continue developing a regional environmental management plan (REMP) for the Northwest Pacific Ocean, the Authority, in collaboration with Japan, held a workshop from 19 to 23 February 2024.¹⁵ It brought together 38 experts from 15 countries.¹⁶
18. On March 2024, the Authority issued a discussion paper 01/2024 “Development of Regional environmental management plans (REMPs) by the International Seabed Authority and their legal status”.¹⁷

Implementation and Review of the Strategic Plan 2019-2025

19. The Strategic Plan of the Authority for the period 2019-2023 and its High-Level Action Plan have guided the work of the Authority since 2019. During the 28th Session, the Secretary-General presented his reports on the implementation of the Strategic Plan¹⁸ and on the proposed draft Strategic Plan for the period 2024–2028¹⁹.
20. The Assembly decided in July 2023 to extend the current Strategic Plan (originally for the period 2019–2023) by two years (2019-2025) and requested the Secretary-General to review the High-Level Action Plan 2019–2023 with a view to extending it in line with the

¹³ See [ISBA/27/C/42](#).

¹⁴ See [ISBA/28/FC/3](#).

¹⁵ The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd and the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology of Japan.

¹⁶ [Workshop on the Regional Environmental Management Plan for the Area of the Northwest Pacific - International Seabed Authority \(isa.org.jm\)](#).

¹⁷ The document is available at [DP Development of REMPs by ISA.pdf](#)

¹⁸ See [ISBA/28/A/11](#).

¹⁹ See [ISBA/28/A/7](#).

extension of the Strategic Plan (2019-2025).²⁰

Implementation of the Action Plan of the Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development ²¹

21. The Authority promotes and encourages the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and coordinates and disseminates the results when available.^{22 23} It may also carry out marine scientific research concerning the Area. In addition, the Authority has the responsibility to encourage the development of appropriate programs to strengthen the capacity of developing and technologically less developed States.²⁴ To deliver its mandate, the Authority serves as a global driving force in fostering scientific collaborations to advance knowledge and technological innovations in deep-sea research.
22. In 2020, the Authority formalised its contribution by adopting a dedicated action plan in support of the Ocean Decade (MSR Action Plan).²⁵ It puts forward six strategic research priorities and has since served as a global framework and agenda to advance deep-sea research.^{26 27}
23. Since adopting the MSR Action Plan, the Authority has organised 29 events to promote scientific deep-sea research, workshops, webinars, information series, and side events in global fora involving over 1,000 experts. Additionally, 44 strategic partnerships were forged to deliver the MSR Action Plan, and 19 Member States and the European Union have provided support. Among the knowledge products produced, five ISA Technical Studies have been delivered.²⁸
24. The Authority's contribution to the UN Ocean Decade also builds on the cooperation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (IOC-UNESCO) through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2000.²⁹ In this context, IOC-UNESCO commissioned a report in 2023 on enhancing UN-Oceans engagement for the Ocean Decade. The Authority emphasised the need for advancing coordination in the Decade's implementation among UN agencies. Also, the Authority has continued to actively participate through its contribution to the Ocean Decade Alliance, the monitoring and evaluation working group

²⁰ See [ISBA/28/A/16](#).

²¹ See [ISBA/28/A/8](#).

²² [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#), art. 143 (2).

²³ 1994 Agreement, Annex, Section 1, para. 5 (h).

²⁴ [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#), art. 143 (3).

²⁵ See [ISBA/26/A/17](#).

²⁶ The document is available at [Strategic Plan Booklet.pdf](#)

²⁷ See [ISBA/28/A/18](#) para. 48.

²⁸ [ISA Technical Study 28](#); [ISA Technical Study 29](#); [ISA Technical Study 30](#); [ISA Technical Study 32](#); [ISA Technical Study 33](#).

²⁹ See [ISBA/6/A/9](#) para. 13.

and the communications advisory group for the Decade.³⁰

25. In summary, during the reporting period, the Authority increased its efforts with 11 events organized compared to 7 in the last period. The data management strategic roadmap for 2023 to 2028 was delivered, and four new initiatives under strategic research priorities 2 and 6 were launched. The achievements were highlighted in two global forums, the Partnership Fund was operationalized, and the Authority issued a call to action to accelerate the implementation of the MSR Action Plan.

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

26. Three workshops were organized during the reporting period. In June 2023, over 30 policymakers and scientists, including 6 representatives of small island developing States (SIDS) and 2 representatives of landlocked developing countries (LDCs), participated in two workshops organized in Kingston, Jamaica, by the Authority in collaboration with the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of Sea of the United Nations (DOALOS). The first workshop focussed on key components of the Third World Ocean Assessment (WOA III), and the second on enhancing science-policy interfaces.³¹ As indicated in paragraph 17, in collaboration with Japan, the Authority held a workshop from 19 to 23 February 2024.³² It brought together 38 experts from 15 countries.³³

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

27. Two new initiatives were launched. In May 2023, the “One Thousand Reasons” campaign awarded ten grants to eight research institutions and two citizen scientists to describe nearly 100 deep-sea species by the end of 2024.³⁴ A species checklist was launched in July 2023 in collaboration with the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS).³⁵ It currently comprises data on 285 species found in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.
28. In addition, the Authority organized two scientific workshops in collaboration with the Republic of Korea. The first, held in October 2023 in Vietnam, focused on enhancing data sharing and establishing best practices for standardization.³⁶ As a result the interoperability

³⁰ See [ISBA/28/A/8](#).

³¹ [Workshops in support of the Third World Assessment](#).

³² The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd and the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology of Japan.

³³ [Workshop on the Regional Environmental Management Plan for the Area of the Northwest Pacific - International Seabed Authority \(isa.org.jm\)](#).

³⁴ Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, University of Lodz, National University of Singapore, Museums Victoria, Biology Centre of the Upper Austria Landes-Kultur GmbH, Second Institute of Oceanography, Ministry of Natural Resource, and the University of Cape Town.

³⁵ [Species Checklist CCZ SSKI](#).

³⁶ <https://www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-enhancing-biological-data-sharing-to-advance-deep-sea-taxonomy/>.

of data of DeepData with global initiatives such as the Darwin Core was enhanced.³⁷ The second one was held from 3 to 6 June 2024, on the development of a scientific approach to identifying key deep-sea taxa in support of the protection of the marine environment.³⁸

29. To raise awareness of the achievements of ‘Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative’ (SSKI) first year, the Authority hosted a side event during the twenty-eighth session of the Authority’s Council. Additionally, at the 50th Annual Meeting of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), hosted in September 2023 in Kingston, Jamaica.³⁹
30. Furthermore, the Authority participated in global initiatives, including the fourth meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies, organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, and UNEP, in Korea in June 2024.⁴⁰

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

31. The Authority advanced its technology assessment and identified five priority domains: ocean observation and communication; monitoring; autonomy, automation, robotics; machine learning and artificial intelligence; and mining, energy, and metal processing. In addition, the Authority organizes capacity development initiatives and facilitates international cooperation to ensure all States have the necessary tools to participate in activities in the Area, fulfilling its mandate to transfer technology to developing States.⁴¹
32. In April 2024, in Portugal, the Authority organized a workshop on advanced technologies in collaboration with the Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science (INESCTEC).⁴² INESC TEC coordinates the EU Horizon project ‘Technology-based impact assessment tool for sustainable, transparent deep-sea mining exploration and exploitation’ (TRIDENT) with the Authority seated in its Advisory Board.⁴³ 120 participants attended, including government officials from 29 countries.
33. In May 2024, the Authority participated online in the Annual Meeting of the Deep Ocean Observing Strategy (DOOS) as part of its Advisory Board.

³⁷ Darwin Code.

³⁸ <https://www.isa.org.jm/events/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-scientific-approach-to-identifying-key-deep-sea-taxa-in-support-of-the-protection-of-the-marine-environment-in-the-area/>

³⁹ <https://www.isa.org.jm/news/gesamp-concludes-its-50th-annual-session-held-at-isa-headquarters/>.

⁴⁰ <https://www.cbd.int/marine/soi/soi-gd4.png>.

⁴¹ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 144.

⁴² <https://www.isa.org.jm/events/expert-scoping-workshop-on-charting-future-horizons-harnessing-advanced-technologies-for-the-protection-and-sustainable-use-of-the-international-seabed-area/>.

⁴³ <https://deepseatrident.eu>.

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

34. Assessing the potential impacts of activities in the Area is crucial in discharging the Authority's mandate to protect the marine environment and enabling the Authority to take measures to prevent damage to marine flora and fauna.⁴⁴ During the reporting period, the Secretariat has published a technical study on interactions between fishing and mineral resource-related activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction.⁴⁵
35. The Authority facilitated the further elaboration of scientific approaches and tools for cumulative impact assessments. Qualitative mathematical models were discussed during the REMP workshops in collaboration with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).
36. Furthermore, the Authority provided input for a scoping paper that informed the Joint Call on the ecological aspects of deep-sea mining launched by the Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans) in October 2023.⁴⁶ The Authority also communicated that potential overlap between research facilitated by JPI Oceans and existing processes led by the Authority should be avoided.
37. The Authority continued its role on the Advisory Board of the project "Seabed Mining and Resilience to Experimental Impact" (SMARTEx), funded by the UK government.
38. Upon invitation from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, referring to paragraph 388 of the General Assembly resolution 77/248, the Authority contributed to drafting a publication on managing marine geospatial information for sustainable ocean governance. The report will catalogue global marine geospatial data collection initiatives to identify potential "data deserts."⁴⁷

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

39. Sharing non-confidential data, following the "findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable" (FAIR) principle, and disseminating information is essential for advancing deep-sea literacy and informing policy-making processes. The launch of the DeepData database in 2019 fulfils this responsibility. DeepData has become a one-stop shop for all environmental data collected in the Area⁴⁸ and has an average of 5,500 monthly visitors.
40. During the second part of its twenty-eighth session, the Legal and Technical Commission endorsed a data management strategic roadmap for 2023 to 2028⁴⁹ and during the first part

⁴⁴ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, art. 145.

⁴⁵ ISA Technical Study 33.

⁴⁶ JPI Joint Call on ecological aspects of deep-sea mining.

⁴⁷ UN General Assembly resolution 77/248, para 388.

⁴⁸ <https://data.isa.org.jm/isa/map/>

⁴⁹ See ISBA/28/C/27 para. 17.

of the twenty-ninth session, the Commission endorsed the implementation work plan for this roadmap.⁵⁰

41. The Authority set up individual data management review training for contractors in Kingston, Jamaica, since May 2024.
42. The Authority continued its partnership with the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), which contains 99 datasets from 2004 to 2021, with data from 456 species.⁵¹ The Authority is also working with the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) project office of IOC-UNESCO to incorporate oceanographic data in the Ocean Infohub.⁵²
43. Five additional contractors voluntarily disclosed their bathymetric data, totalling 92.9 gigabytes, to the AREA 2030 Initiative. The Authority established this initiative with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) to accelerate the mapping of the seabed.⁵³
⁵⁴ The data collected at unprecedented high resolution (100m) significantly contributes to the global effort of such as SEABED2030 and GEBCO.⁵⁵

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

44. Two expert deployments from women experts from Tanzania and Nepal took place in Kingston from February to April 2024 under the joint project framework between the Authority and the UN Technology Bank. The pilot projects involved research on the lithium cycle and the potential radioactivity of manganese nodules that will inform knowledge products.
45. In October 2023, the ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre in Qingdao, China, organized for the second time a two-week workshop on marine science and technology.⁵⁶ It involved 25 participants from 21 developing countries, including three representatives from SIDS and six from LDCs.
46. Women's empowerment remains a central focus under this strategic research priority. In the context of the Authority's Women in Deep-Sea Research project (WIDSR), ten additional contractors pledged to allocate 50 per cent of training opportunities to qualified women applicants.⁵⁷ Moreover, as part of the Authority's global mentoring programme "S.H.E." (See Her Exceed) which supports women experts from developing countries, the

⁵⁰ See ISBA/29/LTC/CRP.6.

⁵¹ <https://obis.org/node/9d2d95be-32eb-4d81-8911-32cb8bc641c8>.

⁵² <https://oceaninfohub.org>.

⁵³ <https://www.isa.org.jm/area-2030/>

⁵⁴ Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC), Government of Korea, Kiribati's, Loke Marine Minerals, Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. (NORI) and Tonga Offshore Mining Limited (TOML).

⁵⁵ <https://seabed2030.org>.

⁵⁶ <https://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/isa-china-joint-training-and-research-centre/>.

⁵⁷ <https://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/widsr-project/>.

Authority successfully matched eight mentors with mentees.⁵⁸

Engagement and resource mobilization for the implementation of the MSR Action Plan

47. The Authority engaged in three global forums to raise awareness and attract additional partners and resources to accelerate the implementation of the MSR Action Plan.
48. In September 2023, the Secretary-General of the Authority together with Argentina and Bangladesh launched a call to action at a side event during the Sustainability Development Goals Summit in New York urging accelerated investment in deep-sea science and technology.⁵⁹ Fourteen member states have signed the call, including one developing country, one LDC, and four SIDS.⁶⁰ In May 2024, the Authority opened the call to action to other stakeholders, including contractors and research institutions.
49. The implementation of the MSR Action Plan was accelerated through projects under the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund (ISAPF).⁶¹ The multi-donor fund launched in 2022 aims at promoting marine scientific research and contributing to capacity development programmes and activities.⁶² Eleven different projects received financial support to advance women's empowerment and leadership, capacity of developing States particularly LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, as well as to bolster deep-sea research, innovation, and capacity development in Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.
50. The Authority commissioned a report entitled "The contribution of ISA to the scientific objectives of the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development". The report is being prepared in collaboration with a group of 16 international experts provided strategic advice.⁶³ The report will be launched later this year.

⁵⁸ <https://www.isa.org.jm/widsr-mentoring-programme-2/>.

⁵⁹ See [Call to Action SDG Summit](#).

⁶⁰ The list of countries who signed the call is available [here](#).

⁶¹ See <https://www.isa.org.jm/isa-partnership-fund/>.

⁶² See [ISBA/ST/SGB/2022/1](#)

⁶³ Dr. Tomasz Abramowski, Director, Interoceanmetal Joint Organisation, Poland; Dr. Natalia Amezcua, Research Deputy Manager, Mexican Geological Survey, Mexico; Ms. Rima Brown, Senior Knowledge Management Officer, Seabed Minerals Authority, Cook Islands, Prof. Georgy Cherkashov, Managing Director, Institute for Geology and Mineral Resources of the Ocean, Russia; Dr. Suzan M. El-Gharabawy, Vice President, National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Egypt; Mr. Hank Hedge, Senior Geologist, Mines and Geology Division Ministry of Transport and Mining, Jamaica, Ms. Federica Irene Falomi, Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Technology Bank for LDCs, Prof. Pedro Madureira, University of Evora; Mr. John Astony Mataro, Senior Geologist, Mining Commission, Tanzania; Dr. Sandip Mukhopadhyaya, Scientist, Ocean Sciences and Technology Division, Ministry of Earth Science, India; Mr. Sai Navoti, Chief SIDS Unit, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Dr. Marzia Rovere, Senior Research Scientist, National Research Council, Italy; Dr. Kathy Soapi, Coordinator, The Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Fiji; Dr. Samantha Smith, President, International Marine Minerals Society, Canada; Mr. Joshua Tuhumwire, Independent Consultant and Member of the Legal and Technical Commission, Uganda; and Prof. Gao Xiang, Executive Director, ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre, China.

Capacity development and training programme

51. The Authority launched in July 2023, DeepDive, an e-learning platform uniquely dedicated to addressing legal, technical and scientific aspects of the regime set out in the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. This platform aims to enhance the capacity of government officials and practitioners from States Parties, young graduates, personnel of partner institutions, and other stakeholders. To date, 50 students have been awarded the DeepDive certificate.
52. A total of 13 training opportunities were made available under the Contractors' Training Programme for candidates from developing States. The placements were offered by 19 contractors pursuant to 26 exploration contracts. More than half of the opportunities involved at-sea training, and 59 per cent of the placements went to women candidates, while 37 per cent was awarded to experts from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.⁶⁴
53. From 9 to 11 October 2023, the Authority-Philippines National Capacity Development Workshop on Deep-Sea Matters took place in Manila, the Philippines. It brought together over 80 government officials, experts, academics, and representatives from the private sector.
54. On 14 November 2023, the national focal points in charge of liaising with the Authority on matters relating to capacity development (NAFOP-CD) met for the second time in 2023 in Jamaica. As of today, there are 60 NAFOP-CD.
55. On 16 November 2023, the Authority held the second webinar of 2023 under its "Deep DiplomaSea" series organized for the personnel of permanent missions to the Authority and the United Nations.
56. In January 2024, the Authority opened the first ever Joint Training and Research Centre for Africa and the Middle East, in Alexandria, Egypt, as part of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Authority and the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt. The first training course on environmental impact assessment (EIA) is scheduled for September 2024,⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ for 20 government officials and scientists from Member States.
57. On 5 February 2024, the Authority launched the International Seabed Authority Capacity Development Alumni Network (iCAN) to bolster human resource development, monitor the impact of training and facilitate collaboration among the Authority's trainees. In its first call for applications, 73 alums from 33 Member States were selected.
58. The Authority signed two letters of cooperation with partners in Japan, one with the Kobe Ocean-Bottom Exploration Center (KOBEC) on 21 February 2024, and another one with

⁶⁴ 29 LDCs, 2 LDC/LLDCs, 1 LLDCs, 12 SIDS and 7 LDCs/SIDS.

⁶⁵ See ISBA/28/A/18 para. 49.

⁶⁶ See ISBA/28/A/13.

the Japanese Ocean Mining Industry Promotion Roundtable, in May 2024.

59. From 3 to 5 April 2024, in Portugal, the first international expert workshop was held on the best approaches to harness advanced technologies for the protection and sustainable use of the international seabed area, in collaboration with the INESC TEC. The event was attended by over 120 participants, including 31 government representatives from 29 different countries, among them 13 developing States from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
60. On 17 May 2024, the Authority opened the first ever African Academy for Deep Sea Diplomacy, hosted by Cameroon at its Diplomatic Academy in Yaounde. The launch of the Academy for Deep Sea Diplomacy followed the approval by the Assembly, in July 2023, of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Authority and the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC),⁶⁷ a governmental entity established to deliver diplomatic courses for African diplomats. This African Academy is intended to provide training to diplomats from English and French-speaking African countries in the field of the law of the sea, with particular reference to the regime of the Area under Part XI of the Convention.
61. In May 2024, the Authority launched a new partnership in the Caribbean Region in the margins of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS, hosted by the Centre of Excellence for the Blue Economy at the University of the West Indies Five Islands campus in Antigua and Barbuda. Through this cooperation, the Authority is planning to organize two workshops in the Caribbean region with a focus on capacity development in the field of marine scientific research. In particular, the Authority will assess the immediate capacity needs of Caribbean countries in the field of marine scientific research in the Area and identify, together with experts nominated by each Caribbean country, a roadmap dedicated to advance marine scientific research in the region.

The 1994 Agreement

62. In accordance with article 156, paragraph 2, of the Convention, all States Parties are, ipso facto, members of the Authority. As of 14 June 2024, there are 169 parties to the Convention (168 States and the European Union), and thus there were 169 members of the Authority. The membership has remained unchanged since Rwanda became a party to the Convention on 18 May 2023. As of 14 June 2024, there are 152 parties 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 (1994 Agreement). This almost universal membership has strengthened the Part XI regime over the past 30 years. There are 17 members of the Authority that became parties to the Convention before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement and have yet to become parties to it, namely Bahrain, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mali,

⁶⁷ See [ISBA/28/A/12](#).

the Marshall Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and the Sudan.

Permanent missions to the Authority

63. As of 14 June 2024, 39 members maintained permanent missions to the Authority: Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Nauru, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Zimbabwe and the European Union. During the reporting period, the new permanent representatives of six States presented their credentials to the Secretary-General, namely Burkina Faso, India, Indonesia, Mauritania, the Philippines and Sierra Leone.

The Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority

64. The Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority was adopted by the Assembly on 27 March 1998 and entered into force on 31 May 2003. The total number of parties to the Protocol remains at 48. Members of the Authority that are not yet parties to the Protocol have been strongly encouraged to take the steps necessary to become parties at their earliest convenience. The Secretariat sent out a note verbale to that effect on 15 February 2024.

Implementation of article 84, paragraph 2 of the Convention

65. Pursuant to article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention, coastal States are obliged to give due publicity to charts or lists of geographical coordinates and, in the case of those showing the outer limit lines of the continental shelf, to deposit a copy of each such chart or list with the Secretary-General of the Authority. 16 members of the Authority had deposited such charts and lists with the Secretary-General, namely Australia, Cabo Verde, the Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, France (with respect to Guadeloupe, Guyana, the Kerguelen islands, Martinique, New Caledonia, Reunion and the Saint-Paul et Amsterdam islands), Ghana, Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Niue, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Senegal and Tuvalu. The Secretariat urges all coastal States to deposit those charts or lists of coordinates. Knowledge of the precise delineation is critical to allow the establishment of the geographical limits of the Area with certainty. Each year, the Secretariat sends out a note verbale requesting the deposit of such charts or lists of coordinates. The last such note was sent out on 22 February 2024.

Budget and status of contributions

66. In accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the administrative expenses of the Authority are to be met by assessed contributions of its members until the Authority has sufficient funds from other sources to meet its administrative expenses. The scale of

assessments for this purpose is based on the scale used for the regular budget of the United Nations, adjusted for differences in membership, with a ceiling assessment rate of 22 per cent and a floor assessment rate of 0.01 per cent.

67. Since 2013, the Authority has also applied a system of cost recovery whereby contractors are required to pay an annual overhead charge representing the cost of services provided to them by the Authority. For the financial period 2023–2024, overhead charges are anticipated to account for approximately 22 per cent of the revenues of the Authority.
68. As of 31 May 2024, 61 per cent of the value of contributions to the 2024 budget due from States and the European Union had been received. Outstanding contributions from member States for prior periods (1998–2023) amounted to USD 551,359. This is a low figure by historical standards. The Authority collected 97 per cent of assessed contributions due in 2023. Unfortunately, as of now, there are 38 States Parties that are in arrears of contributions for two years or more and thus potentially subject to Article 184 of the Convention. According to this article, a member of the Authority that is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions shall have no vote. Information on these States Parties has been transmitted to the President of the Assembly.⁶⁸
69. As of 31 May 2024, the balance of the working capital fund stood at USD 741,338, against an approved level of USD 750,000.

Status of the funds

70. The Voluntary Trust Fund for the participation of members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee from developing countries was established in 2002. As of 31 May 2024, the total contributions to the fund over its lifetime amounted to USD 1,444,547. During the reporting period, contributions were made by the Philippines (USD 12,500), Mexico (USD 10,000) and the United Kingdom (USD 12,243), and three contractors contributed USD 6,000 each. As of the same date, the balance of the fund was USD 22,591.
71. With regard to the voluntary trust fund to support the participation of members of the Council of the Authority from developing States in the meetings of the Council, from July 2023 to June 2024, contributions were made by France (USD 21,575), Nauru (USD 3,342), the Kingdom of the Netherlands (USD 15,470), the Philippines (USD 7,500), Portugal (USD 10,946) and the United Kingdom (USD 12,243). As of 31 May 2024, the total contributions to the fund over its lifetime amounted to USD 223,807. As of the same date, the balance of the fund was USD 37,514.
72. Upon a recommendation of the Finance Committee and of the Council, the Assembly adopted in July 2023 a supplementary budget proposal to cover the costs of the

⁶⁸ See [ISBA/29/A/7](#).

establishment of the position of an interim Director-General of the Enterprise.⁶⁹

73. With regard to the trust fund for extrabudgetary support for the Authority. Since its creation, the fund has raised USD 2,488,177 and had a net balance of USD 697,393 as of 31 May 2024. This amount includes contributions by the European Union totalling USD 381,352 to the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative project.
74. A key milestone has been achieved with the establishment in 2022 of the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund (ISAPF). It has received contributions from 2022 to 2024 by Greece, China, Mexico, France, Monaco, Russian Federation and Spain. The ISAPF has allocated more than USD 1,029,654 for eleven different projects.

Relationship with the United Nations and other relevant international organizations and bodies

United Nations

75. On 5 December 2023, the Secretary-General made a statement to the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly under agenda 75 (a) Oceans and the Law of the Sea.⁷⁰
76. From 18 to 22 September 2023, the Authority hosted the 50th annual session of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) at its headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica.
77. The Authority also continued to engage actively in the work of UN-Oceans and participated in a series of technical meetings as well as a meeting of principals held on 16 January 2024 to discuss cooperation and coordination in relation to the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (2023 Agreement). At that meeting, the Authority highlighted the importance of inter-agency cooperation and coordination and areas in which the contribution of the Authority, building on 30 years of experience in effectively regulating and managing the common heritage of humankind, could bring significant added value to support the implementation of the 2023 Agreement.
78. From 10 to 12 April 2024, the Authority participated at the 2024 United Nations Ocean Decade Conference held in Barcelona, Spain. The Authority presented the progress made in the implementation of the Authority's action plan for marine scientific research, discussed future areas of action and exchanged best practices. In partnership with three Member States, and eight international partners, including the IOC-UNESCO and academic institutions, the Authority co-organized three side events on topics such as knowledge, innovation and empowerment in deep-sea research; how to harness private sector data to boost ocean science and drive a sustainable ocean economy; and gender

⁶⁹ See [ISBA/25/A/15](#).

⁷⁰ The written statement is available at [ISA_Secretary-General_Statement_UNGA_78.pdf](#) (isa.org.jm).

equity in ocean sciences and policymaking.⁷¹

79. In May 2024, the Authority participated in the 4th International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda and organised two side events on the advancement of women's empowerment and leadership in deep-sea research, and on leveraging SIDS knowledge, technology, innovation, and capacity to advance deep-sea research.
80. During the thirty-fourth Meeting of States parties to the Convention, on 10 June 2024, the Secretary-General provided information on the activities carried out by the Authority since the last Meeting of States Parties.⁷²
81. On 12 June 2024, at a side event during the thirty-fourth Meeting of States parties to the Convention, the Authority released a new independent report, "A review of the contribution of ISA to the objectives of the 2023 Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction".⁷³ The report carries out an analysis of how the provisions of the 2023 Agreement may be relevant to the mandate of ISA and considers how its existing work can contribute to the overall objective of promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

International Labour Organization

82. In the twenty-eighth session, the Council approved the agreement on cooperation between the Authority and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

83. In the twenty-ninth session, the Council approved the memorandum of understanding between the Authority and FAO.⁷⁴ The cooperation will include sharing non-confidential deep-sea data and exchanging best practices on scientific approaches to the sustainable management of activities.⁷⁵

OSPAR

84. In the twenty-ninth session, the Secretary-General presented a report⁷⁶ on cooperation with the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Commission). The report was requested by the Assembly at its twenty-eighth session, concerning the decision adopted by the OSPAR Commission, resulting in the extension of the scope of the North Atlantic current and Evlanov Sea basin marine

⁷¹ [ISA's engagements at UN Ocean Decade Conference](#).

⁷² The written statement is available at [SG Statement Thirty-fourth-Meeting-of-States-Parties-to-the-United-Nations-Convention-on-the-Law-of-the-Sea.pdf](#) (isa.org.jm)

⁷³ The document is available at <https://www.isa.org.jm/publications/a-review-of-the-contribution-of-isa-to-the-objectives-of-the-2023-agreement-under-unclos/>

⁷⁴ See [ISBA/29/C/9](#), para. 25.

⁷⁵ See [ISBA/29/C/2](#).

⁷⁶ See [ISBA/29/C/6](#).

protected area ('NACES MPA') over the Area, and its potential implications on the exclusive mandate assigned to the Authority over the Area by the Convention. The Council took note of the report and requested the Secretary-General to provide regular updates on the status of cooperation between the two organizations.

End