



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA  
DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF IRAQ AT THE SECOND SESSION OF THE  
PREPARATORY COMMISSION OF THE BBNJ AGREEMENT - ITEM 5 (CLUSTER 1,  
ISSUE 4): ARRANGEMENT FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SECRETARIAT,  
INCLUDING ITS SEAT  
(20 August 2025)**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. From the onset, I wish to thank the Secretariat for providing the information note to aid our discussions and deliberations on the matter. Our Group is still considering various aspects of this topic. However, we wish to make the following initial remarks in this relation.
2. Arrangements regarding the secretariat need to ensure equitable representation of developing countries in the Secretariat composition at various levels, including through the designation of its Secretary and through its staff rules and regulations. This would in turn require due attention to unrepresented and underrepresented developing States in future. Our Group is pleased to see information on this matter in the Matrix provided by the Secretariat.
3. In light of the foregoing, any arrangement for the secretariat should not simply necessitate adherence to equitable geographical representation but should ensure that this vital element is prioritized among other elements to the benefit of developing countries to avoid a situation where developing countries are not equitably represented. Standards of efficiency and competence should not undermine the principle of equitable representation of developing countries. Practical steps should be taken to effectively support representation of developing countries in the secretariat.
4. For instance, ensuring effective equitable geographical representation for election of the Secretary and allocating quotas specifically for experts from developing countries could be one of these steps. Both measures should not be seen as a ceiling but a floor as a starting point to address the underrepresentation of developing States in multilateral organizations. Even more, the presence of experts from developing States should not hinder or limit the future admission of additional experts from developing countries to the secretariat through regular processes.
5. As the Group underlined during the previous meetings of the PrepCom, we stress that in addition to the privileges and immunities of officials and experts of the secretariat of the Agreement, it is also imperative to have due regard to the privileges and immunities of representatives of States participating in the proceedings related to the Agreement and its Conference of Parties. We thank the Secretariat for touching upon this area in the matrix provided to the present session. It is evident that concluding an appropriate and effective headquarters agreement with the host country of the secretariat of the Agreement would be important to ensure efficient functioning of the secretariat and performance of functions of states' representatives and mission.

6. In this regard, it is essential that the host country provides the widest possible range of privileges and immunities to the Secretariat and to its personnel, as well as to the representatives of States Parties and experts in mission attending to international meetings. The applicable framework should also consider the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. Additionally, the host country should offer privileges and immunities to representatives of observer Parties to attend to international meetings, especially considering that during the first COPs it could be expected a gradual growing membership. Furthermore, the host country should offer additional administrative facilities to the personnel and their dependents, as well to representatives of States, in which latter case should be conferred on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination.

7. Inclusivity should be at the center of the establishment of privileges, immunities and facilities to ensure the presence and participation of State representatives in international meetings. Such inclusivity should be reflected through the prompt issuances of visas, freedom of movement within the host country, unimpeded transit to and from the host country, respecting dignity and freedom of representatives, in addition providing adequate transportation conditions, and ensuring the safety of attending representatives

8. We believe that the mandates of the secretariat need to be addressed in a balanced, impartial and cost-effective manner. For example, Article 50(4)(f) stipulates that the secretariat shall also “provide assistance with the implementation of ...(the) agreement”; further discussions could be made on the ways and means that the secretariat could assist Parties, upon their request, in the implementation of the Agreement. Meanwhile, since the secretariat acts as the administrative organ of the Agreement, it is natural to require that the secretariat should function under the guidance and supervision of the CoP. In accordance with the Agreement, , the decision on the seat of the secretariat lies with the first CoP. At the present stage, the PrepCom may embark on discussing the conditions and procedures for the selection of the seat of the secretariat for the CoP’s reference.

9. Finally, we believe the aforementioned structural elements require careful consideration by this PrepCom to ensure the Secretariat effectively serves the Parties and the Agreement’s objectives.

**I thank you.**