



CONTRIBUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY TO THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA

1. This contribution is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 80/110 of 9 December 2025, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, and highlights the main developments in the work of the International Seabed Authority (“the Authority”) since 31 August 2025, as well as activities undertaken or ongoing in implementation of the provisions of the resolution relevant to the mandate of the Authority. During this period, the Authority made significant progress in advancing the regulatory framework for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, advanced the operationalization of organs and mechanisms provided for under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (“the Convention”) and the 1994 Agreement, and deepened its cooperation within the United Nations system, including in relation to the implementation of the Agreement under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (“BBNJ Agreement”).

Advancing the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area

2. The elaboration of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area remained the foremost priority of the Authority. On 23 December 2025, the Secretary-General published the Further Revised Consolidated Text of the draft regulations, together with a further revised suspense document and, for the first time, a clean version of the text providing members with a better overview of how the content might look. a consolidated overview of the emerging regulatory framework. The Secretariat also delivered a draft indicative list of outstanding issues, which the Council endorsed as the basis for the negotiations during the thirty-first session.

3. At the first part of its thirty-first session, held in Kingston from 9 to 20 March 2026 under the presidency of Mayank Joshi (India), the Council made significant progress in advancing discussion of outstanding issues through detailed textual negotiations, informal working groups and Friends of the President groups. At the close of the session, the Council endorsed the preparation by the Secretariat of a third revision of the consolidated text, incorporating proposals emerging from those modalities of work, together with an updated list of outstanding issues, for consideration at the second part of the session, from 13 to 24 July 2026. The Council also endorsed a request to the Legal and Technical Commission to provide recommendations on specific matters relating to the development of standards and guidelines in support of the draft regulations. The Council will assess, at the end of the thirty-first session, the remaining work, if any, required prior to the adoption of the rules, regulations and procedures, and will establish a road map to that end.

Economic Planning Commission, Enterprise and Common Heritage Fund

4. The Authority advanced the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission, provided for under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Pursuant to the



decision of the Council on the operationalization of the Commission, the Finance Committee will report on the financial implications of its establishment, for the consideration of the Council at the thirty-first session in July 2026. Work also continued on the implementation of the mandate of the Interim Director-General of the Enterprise, including preparatory work related to the future functioning of the Enterprise in accordance with the 1994 Agreement.

5. In addition, as requested by the Assembly, the Secretariat has prepared a concept note which sets out the possible functionalities of the Common Heritage Fund as one of the possible ways for distribution of income from activities in the Area to be shared.

Entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement

6. The BBNJ Agreement entered into force on 17 January 2026. The Authority and the Part XI regime form an important part of the institutional and legal landscape relevant to the implementation of the Agreement. The Secretariat participated actively in the Preparatory Commission process and convened a high-level workshop in New York in November 2025 to engage member States on the role of the Authority in supporting the objectives of the Agreement. The Council reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the implications of the BBNJ Agreement for the work of the Authority and will resume its consideration of the matter in July 2026.

Status of exploration contracts

7. As at 31 March 2026, 31 contracts for exploration were in force: 19 for polymetallic nodules, 8 for polymetallic sulphides and 4 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. These included a new contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with the Government of India on 15 September 2025. Acting on the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, the Council approved in March 2026 six applications for the extension, for a period of five years, of contracts for exploration for polymetallic nodules. The Commission continued its review of contractor performance and compliance with contractual obligations and will report further to the Council in July 2026. In fulfilment of their training obligations, contractors provided 70 new training opportunities for personnel from developing States under 19 programmes. The eighth annual consultative meeting with contractors was held in Goa, India, in September 2025, and the Secretary-General convened dialogues with contractors and with sponsoring States in the margins of the Council meetings.

Membership and institutional developments

8. With the accession of Kyrgyzstan to the Convention on 20 September 2025 and the ratification by Cambodia on 6 February 2026, the membership of the Authority reached 172, comprising 171 States and the European Union, further consolidating the near-universal character of the Part XI regime. The accessions of Belize and Chad brought the number of Parties to the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the Authority to 51. New



permanent missions to the Authority were established by Sri Lanka and the Bahamas, bringing the total to 46. The Secretary-General also continued to strengthen the institutional readiness, governance and operational resilience of the Secretariat, including through enhanced alignment with the United Nations common system and the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2025–2028.

Marine scientific research and capacity development

9. In implementation of its action plan for marine scientific research in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Authority expanded the ISA Deep-Sea Biobank initiative, in collaboration with the Republic of Korea, to facilitate open access to deep-sea biological samples and genetic data, and scaled up the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative with the support of new donors. The DeepData database attracted approximately 96,000 visitors, who downloaded over 200 gigabytes of environmental and oceanographic data, and the Secretariat contributed to the third World Ocean Assessment. Since January 2026, the Secretariat serves on the Advisory Board of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

10. The first phase of the Global Mentoring Programme S.H.E. (“See Her Exceed”), the flagship initiative of the Authority for advancing the participation of women from developing countries in deep-sea-related affairs, was concluded in December 2025 with the support of France. Its outputs informed the development of the S.H.E. Gender Charter, setting out practical commitments to promote the safe participation of women in at-sea activities, to be launched at the Assembly in July 2026. The Secretary-General joined the International Gender Champions network in December 2025. The inaugural in-person workshop of the Africa Academy for Deep Sea Diplomacy was held in Yaoundé in February 2026, training 26 participants from 16 African countries, and the joint training and research centers of the Authority with China and Egypt continued to deliver knowledge-transfer workshops for experts from developing States.

11. The Authority also intensified its engagement with landlocked developing countries. In November 2025, the Authority co-convened with the Global Chair of the Landlocked Developing Countries Group a high-level seminar in New York on the rights and opportunities of those countries under the Convention. Preparations also advanced for a global workshop on landlocked developing countries and the regime of the Area, to be co-organized with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, addressing, inter alia, benefit-sharing and opportunities in marine scientific research.

Outreach and cooperation within the United Nations system

12. The first International Day of the Deep Seabed was observed on 1 November 2025, raising global awareness of the Area and its resources as the common heritage of humankind; the General Assembly noted the proclamation of the Day with appreciation. In



December 2025, the Secretary-General addressed the General Assembly for the first time, outlining the priorities of the Authority and calling for the completion of a strong, enforceable regulatory framework for activities in the Area. The Secretariat also operationalized its memorandum of understanding with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations through a first joint workshop on interactions between deep-sea fisheries and activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, participated in the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and remained actively engaged in UN-Oceans, including in relation to enhanced coordination and cooperation on matters relevant to the BBNJ Agreement.

13. Looking ahead, the thirty-first session of the Authority, in July 2026, will mark a critical juncture in the negotiations of the exploitation regulations. The Authority remains committed to discharging its mandate under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement on the basis of the rule of law, science-based decision-making and the effective protection of the marine environment, for the benefit of humankind as a whole.