

Statement by the Delegation of Bangladesh at the 22nd Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) on Tuesday, 19 July 2016

Mr. President,

The Bangladesh delegation is indeed pleased to see you in the Chair and thanks this august Assembly for reposing its faith in your stewardship. We acknowledge the warm hospitality of the Government and people of Jamaica. We also thank the Secretariat for making excellent arrangements for this session.

My delegation thanks the Secretary General for his comprehensive Report. We appreciate his acknowledging the presentation of credentials by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the International Seabed Authority (ISA) during the reporting period.

The Authority is at a critical juncture as it finds itself poised to move from prospecting and exploration to exploitation of marine minerals in the Area in the foreseeable future. We believe the designated contractors are working in right earnest and remain committed to move to exploitation under circumstances conducive to such ventures. In order to facilitate their work, we stress the need for the Authority to closely monitor progress based on necessary modifications in, and due compliance with, their respective work plans.

We welcome the decision taken by the Council to enhance transparency and accountability by contractors in relation to their applications for further extension of exploration contracts. This would allow the membership to gain further confidence in the contractors' work, create room for the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) to share information with the wider membership while maintaining the confidentiality requirements, and enable the contractors to share their respective challenges going forwards.

We take note of the work done so far by LTC in developing the exploitation code, and its plans to move forward based on a set of identified priorities and broad-based stakeholder consultations. We look forward to furnishing our comments on the initial draft within the stipulated time.

We stress that the regulations should contain an environmental assessment and management plan based on well-informed environmental baseline studies in order to contribute to protection and conservation of the entire spectrum of fauna in the mining areas. As the sole inter-governmental body with the capacity to undertake such work, the Authority creates legitimate expectations for producing environmental baseline studies that would have far-reaching impact on fragile marine ecosystem on the seabed. We suggest that the workshops and seminars being organized in this connection be inclusive enough to ensure participation by the concerned State Parties and other stakeholders.

In terms of administrative arrangements, we consider it important to strike the right balance between the licensing and regulatory functions of the Authority, as currently entrusted with

LTC. Our delegation is positively disposed to setting up an independent inspectorate in order to discharge the Authority's regulatory mandate with the onset of exploitation activities. We look forward to discussing this further in the context of the Article 154 Review.

We take note of LTC's observation about the initial Review report by the designated Consultants as a 'wake up' call in relation to possible recalibration of its work. We feel the time has probably come to take an in-depth look at the mandates, size and composition of the Commission. The only way to ascertain an optimal size of LTC is to have a realistic assessment of the expertise and skills set required for it to deliver on its mandated roles in an efficient and effective manner. The Commission's composition should also reflect equitable geographical representation as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

It is important we contemplate further creative measures that would preclude the gradual expansion of the Commission by apportioning its growing responsibilities among parallel and mutually reinforcing mechanisms.

[In the same vein, we should embark on discussions, at a convenient time, on the merit and feasibility of setting up the Economic Planning Commission and the Enterprise as envisaged by the Convention. These are likely to be time-consuming exercises, and it may be useful to find impetus for these from the evolving work on the Article 154 Review and the exploitation code.]

It is encouraging that the Authority stays focused on further strengthening its programmatic approach based on specific strategic priorities. We take note of the information shared by the Secretary General concerning the inter-operability challenges faced by the data management architecture within the Secretariat, and the need for further upgrading the systems. We hope the recent decision to create additional posts for data management in the Secretariat would help address the challenges to some extent.

We align with the call for the contractors to make relevant data from their prospecting and exploration activities readily and publicly available for the benefit of scientific research, among others. The interface between the contractors and the scientific research communities need to be enhanced through mitigating any potential conflict of interest.

We attach great importance to the Authority's capacity building support for developing and least developed State Parties, especially to facilitate their participation in training programmes, meetings and sensitization events. We recognize the instrumental role played by the Endowment and Voluntary Trust Funds in supporting such capacity building, and appreciate the support a couple of our experts had received in the recent years. The reported decline in the Funds must be reversed to help maintain ISA's contribution to forging meaningful cooperation between developed and developing countries through the agency of contractors. We reiterate our appreciation for the Governments and entities that have contributed to the Funds lately.

Mr. President,

In a future where we commit to leave no one behind, the Authority has the mandated responsibility to ascertain that the benefits accrued from exploration and exploitation of the resources of the Area reach the entire mankind in an equitable manner. As we consider the possibility of drawing a strategic plan for the Authority, we must explore how we can situate its priority deliverables in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The Authority's continued engagement with the ongoing negotiations to draft an international legal instrument on the protection and conservation of bio-diversity beyond national jurisdictions would be critical for ensuring coherence, coordination and complementarity.

To conclude, our delegation wishes to emphasize the need for further efforts and investment by the Secretariat in enhancing the profile, relevance and visibility of the Authority in the UN system and beyond.

On our part, Bangladesh will continue to its modest role in that direction.

I thank you.