

**Statement by Ambassador Tian Qi, Permanent Representative
of China to the International Seabed Authority**

At the 24th Session of the ISA Assembly

Under Agenda Item: Report of the Secretary-General

24 July 2018, Kingston, Jamaica

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation congratulates you on your election to the presidency of the current session of the Assembly. As always, we will support you and the Bureau in your work. It is my conviction that, under your able leadership, the current session will be crowned with success. We wish to thank the Jamaican government and people for the enormous assistance and valuable support that they have accorded ISA over the years.

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the annual report which covers the full spectrum of work of the International Seabed Authority over the past year. Notable results have been achieved, ranging from the internal work of the Secretariat to the exchange and cooperation with other international organizations, and from the management of exploration contracts to the development of regulations governing the exploitation of deep-sea mineral resources. The Chinese government registers its appreciations and expects ISA to achieve greater progress in future.

As we speak, international seabed affairs are still at a crucial juncture of transitioning from exploration to exploitation. In 2017, ISA completed its first periodic review of the international seabed regime and adopted the report of the review committee. To date, part of the requirements contained in the report has been met effectively, ranging from changing the format of meetings as a result of which two sessions of the Council have been held this year, a first in history, to establishing a new voluntary trust fund to finance the attendance of Council members from developing countries, and to boosting the understanding of and study on related current domestic laws of Member States.

Developing a strategic plan is an important area related to the implementation of the report on the periodic review. One of the

most important tasks facing the current session is to consider and adopt the strategic plan of the Authority. In China's view, the strategic plan represents top-level design of the work of the Authority for the years to come, with an important bearing on advancing the international seabed undertaking. As is stated in the Secretary-General's report, according to the 1994 Implementing Agreement, prior to the approval of a plan of work for exploitation, ISA shoulders such mandated responsibilities as "monitoring and review of trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities, including regular analysis of world metal market conditions and metal prices, trends and prospects" as well as "study of the potential impact of mineral production from the Area on the economies of developing land-based producers of those minerals which are likely to be most seriously affected". All these statutory responsibilities should be fully reflected in the Strategic Plan.

At the Council session last week, the parties held in-depth and animated discussions on the Regulations on exploitation of deep-sea mineral resources, with consensus reached on many issues while many others still warrant further studies and exploration. It has always been China's view that as the Exploitation Regulations concern many a field, from mining to law, technology and environment, the development of the Regulations simply cannot be

accomplished overnight, and can only progress in a sequential manner on the solid basis of facts and scientific evidence and in accordance with the principle of “extensive discussion and consensus through consultations”. The Exploitation Regulations should be comprehensive and complete, based on scrupulous compliance with UNCLOS and the 1994 Implementing Agreement while reflecting the reasonable balance between the interests of mankind as a whole and those of the sponsoring States and their contractors as well as the reasonable balance between deep-sea exploitation/use and deep-sea environmental protection. The core objective of the Exploitation Regulations is to apply the “common heritage of mankind” principle while stipulations should be made in the Regulations on benefit-sharing, which is a core element of this principle. In addition, as the independent operation of the Enterprise is of special significance for the participation of developing countries in activities in the Area, specific arrangements should be made thereon in the Regulations.

Under the Convention, the Authority has the obligation to take measures to ensure that the marine environment does not suffer from the harmful effect that may arise from activities in the Area. As a tool for active regional management, regional environmental management plans (REMPs) constitute an important environmental protection measure adopted by the Seabed

Authority at the strategic level. China believes that the Exploitation Regulations should specify as an important priority for environmental protection the REMP's whose development requires ISA's leadership and cooperation among the contractors; the relevant standards should be aligned with the proposed international agreement under the BBNJ negotiations.

Mr. President,

As an active participant in international seabed affairs, China has submitted written comments on the draft Exploitation Regulations and the draft Strategic Plan respectively. China attaches great importance to fulfilling its responsibilities and obligations as a sponsoring State. After the promulgation of the Law on the Exploration for and Exploitation of Resources in the Deep Seabed Area in 2016, formulation of supporting legal regulations ensued. In 2017, the State Oceanic Administration of China promulgated three normative documents covering exploration activities in the Area.

As a developing country, China actively supports other fellow developing countries in participating in seabed affairs. For many years, China has continued to contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the Authority to finance the participation of developing country members in meetings of the LTC and the Finance Committee. In future, China will continue to contribute to relevant

funds or projects of the Authority in support of the steady development of the international seabed undertaking.

The exploration contractors sponsored by China have strictly fulfilled their contractual obligations and actively participated in ISA's work for the protection of the deep seabed environment. Last May, COMRA, a Chinese mining-site exploration contractor, and ISA co-hosted in Qingdao, China the International Workshop on the Development of a REMP for Cobalt-rich Ferromanganese Crusts in the Northwest Pacific Ocean. The outcome of the workshop has laid a valuable foundation for the development of REMPs in other related seabed areas.

Mr. President,

The building of a community with shared future for mankind that China advocates is closely connected with the principle that the international seabed area and its resources are part and parcel of the common heritage of mankind. China is ready to work with all other parties, in keeping with the spirit and principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit, in a concerted effort to promote the exploitation of deep-sea mineral resources and protection of the deep-sea environment, and to contribute to the common interests and well-being of mankind.

Thank you, Mr. President.