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Report of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to the Assembly of the Authority pursuant to article 166, paragraph 4, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (“the Convention”). The report provides information on the work of the Authority during the period from July 2015 to June 2016.

2. The Authority is an autonomous international organization established under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (“the 1994 Agreement”). It is the organization through which States parties to the Convention, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, in particular with a view to administering the resources of the Area.

3. The Authority has a number of other specific responsibilities under the Convention, such as the responsibility to distribute to States parties to the Convention payments or contributions in kind derived from exploitation of the resources of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, pursuant to article 82, paragraph 4, of the Convention and the responsibility, under articles 145 and 209, to establish international rules, regulations and procedures to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment from activities in the Area and to adopt measures to protect and conserve the natural resources of the Area and prevent damage to the flora and fauna of the marine environment.

4. Pending the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation, the Authority is to concentrate on the 11 areas of work listed in paragraph 5 of section 1 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. The main focus is on the following areas:

- (a) Supervisory functions with regard to contracts for exploration;
- (b) Monitoring of trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities, including world metal market conditions and metal prices, trends and prospects;
- (c) Development of an appropriate regulatory framework for the future development of the mineral resources of the Area, including standards for the protection and preservation of the marine environment during their development;
- (d) Promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area through, among other things, a continuing programme of technical workshops, the dissemination of the results of such research and collaboration with contractors and the international scientific community;
- (e) Information-gathering and the establishment and development of unique databases of scientific and technical information, with a view to obtaining a better understanding of the deep ocean environment.

5. As the work of the Authority has progressed, the scope of the work programme has also increased; in particular, new areas of work have been identified. During the reporting period, the Authority continued its work on the development of the framework for exploitation of mineral resources of the Area, concentrating on the seven priority deliverables identified and approved by the Council during the twenty-first session of the Authority, as contained in annex III to the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission during the twenty-first session ([ISBA/21/C/16](#)).

II. The Area

6. In the Convention, the Area is defined as the seabed and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. That means that the establishment of the exact geographic limits of the Area depends on the establishment of the limits of national jurisdiction, including the delineation of the continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea. For that reason, pursuant to article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention, coastal States are obliged to give due publicity to charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points and, in the case of those indicating the outer limit lines of the continental shelf, to deposit a copy of such charts or lists with the Secretary-General of the Authority.

7. To date, six members of the Authority have deposited such charts and lists with the Secretary-General, namely, Australia, France (with respect to Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, New Caledonia and the Kerguelen Islands), Ireland, Mexico, Niue and the Philippines. The Secretary-General takes the opportunity to urge all coastal States to deposit such charts or lists of coordinates as soon as possible after the establishment of the outer limit lines of their continental shelf, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

8. The Authority also has the responsibility, under article 82, paragraph 4, of the Convention, to distribute to States parties to the Convention payments or contributions in kind derived from exploitation of the resources of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. Article 82 is an important component of the concept of the common heritage of mankind. While the article is clear in terms of its purpose, its language leaves a number of important practical issues unresolved. Much further work remains to be done if the provisions are to be applied uniformly and consistently in State practice. In order to avoid potential future disputes over the interpretation and application of article 82, it is crucial that these issues are resolved as soon as possible. Clear guidance as to how article 82 will be implemented in the future will also help to provide greater certainty to the marine minerals industry and enable it to promote more activities on the outer continental shelf.

9. In 2012, the Authority convened a workshop in Beijing that aimed at drawing up guidelines for the implementation of article 82 and the formulation of a model agreement between the Authority and an outer continental shelf State for receiving payments and distribution. The workshop noted, inter alia, that article 82 does not provide definitions for key terms used and recommended that further examination of the implementation needs of article 82 would benefit from a study of key terms used in the article and implicit from its context as they are used in contemporary and industry practices across different jurisdictions. The secretariat has now carried out this study, which will be contained in a publication entitled “A study of key terms in article 82 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”. It is anticipated that the study will help to identify possible paths for a practical approach and build and deepen understanding of the terminological issues in realistic settings.

III. Membership of the Authority

10. In accordance with article 156, paragraph 2, of the Convention, all States parties to the Convention are, ipso facto, members of the Authority. As at 30 April 2016, there were 167 parties to the Convention and thus 167 members of the

Authority (166 States and the European Union). On the same date, there were 147 parties to the 1994 Agreement.

11. There are 20 members of the Authority that became parties to the Convention before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement and that have yet to become parties to the Agreement, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and the Sudan.

12. As provided by General Assembly resolution 48/263 and the 1994 Agreement itself, the provisions of the 1994 Agreement and Part XI of the Convention are to be interpreted and applied together as a single instrument. In the event of any inconsistency between the 1994 Agreement and Part XI of the Convention, the provisions of the 1994 Agreement would prevail. Although members of the Authority that are not parties to the 1994 Agreement necessarily participate in the work of the Authority under arrangements based on that Agreement, becoming a party to the 1994 Agreement would remove any incongruity that currently exists for those States. The Secretary-General encourages all those members of the Authority that are not yet parties to the 1994 Agreement to become parties at the earliest possible opportunity.

IV. Permanent missions to the Authority

13. As at 30 April 2016, the following 24 States, in addition to the European Union, maintained permanent missions to the Authority: Argentina, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, Cuba, France, Gabon, Germany, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, South Africa, Spain and Trinidad and Tobago. During the reporting period, new permanent representatives were appointed by Bangladesh, China and the Russian Federation. Niu Qingbao presented his credentials as the Permanent Representative of China on 4 February 2016. Mohammad Ziauddin presented his credentials as the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh on 13 April 2016 and Vladimir Vinokurov presented his credentials as the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation on 8 June 2016.

V. Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority

14. The Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority was adopted by consensus at the fourth session of the Assembly, on 26 March 1998 (see [ISBA/4/A/8](#)). In accordance with article 18 of the Protocol, it entered into force 30 days after the date of deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification, approval, acceptance or accession, on 31 March 2003.

15. The Protocol deals with the privileges and immunities of the Authority in relation to those matters that are not already covered in the Convention (articles 176 to 183) and is based substantially on articles I, II, IV, V, VI and VII of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13 February 1946. The Protocol, inter alia, provides essential protection to representatives of

members of the Authority who attend meetings of the Authority or who travel to and from those meetings. It also accords to experts on mission for the Authority such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the independent exercise of their functions, while on mission, and for the time spent on journeys in connection with their mission.

16. In the past year, the following four States acceded to the Protocol: Albania (22 October 2015), Iraq (16 February 2016), Guinea (6 April 2016) and Antigua and Barbuda (3 May 2016). This brings the total number of parties to 40, as follows: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guinea, Guyana, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay. A further 13 States have signed the Protocol but have yet to ratify it, namely, the Bahamas, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Greece, Indonesia, Kenya, Malta, Namibia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, the Sudan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

17. In an attempt to encourage other members of the Authority to become parties to the Protocol, on 26 April 2016, the Secretary-General circulated a briefing note further elaborating the provisions of the Protocol and describing the processes necessary for ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. Members of the Authority that are not yet parties are strongly encouraged to take the necessary steps to become parties to the Protocol at their earliest convenience.

VI. Administrative matters

A. Secretariat

18. The total number of established posts in the secretariat remained at 37 (20 Professional, 17 General Service). Three vacant positions were filled during the reporting period, as follows: Mineral Economist (P-5), Procurement Assistant (GS-5) and Administrative Assistant to the Office of Resources and Environmental Monitoring (GS-4).

B. Participation in the common system of the United Nations

19. The Authority applies to its staff the common system of salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the United Nations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. In this regard, the Authority subscribed to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in 2013. The secretariat was represented at the eighty-second session of ICSC, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in March 2016. The agenda included the implementation of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventieth session relating to the work of the Commission, the conditions of service applicable to all categories of staff and the comprehensive review of the common system compensation package.

20. The secretariat of the Authority is a member of the United Nations operations management team¹ in Jamaica. Under its mandate, the team strives to achieve greater efficiencies and cost savings in the operations of its members by streamlining business practices. During the reporting period, the team established a consultancy roster with 12 categories, which now presents an opportunity for pre-screening suppliers. The team has also carried out initial work towards developing a long service agreement with a regional travel agency.

VII. Financial matters

A. Budget

21. At its twentieth session, the Assembly adopted the administrative budget for the financial period 2015-2016 in the amount of \$15,743,143.

B. Status of contributions

22. In accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the administrative expenses of the Authority shall be met by assessed contributions of its members until the Authority has sufficient funds from other sources to meet those expenses. The scale of assessments shall be based on the scale used for the regular budget of the United Nations, adjusted for differences in membership. As at 30 April 2016, 60 per cent of the value of contributions to the 2016 budget due from member States and the European Community had been received from 39.1 per cent of the membership of the Authority.

23. Contributions outstanding from member States for prior periods (1998-2015) amount to \$980,524. Notices are sent on a regular basis to member States, reminding them of the arrears. In accordance with article 184 of the Convention and rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, a member of the Authority which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contribution shall have no vote if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of financial contribution due from it for the preceding two years. As at 31 May 2016, the following 50 members of the Authority had been in arrears for two years or more: Angola, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, the Comoros, the Congo, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, the Niger, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Swaziland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

¹ The participating agencies, in addition to the Authority, are the United Nations Population Fund, the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

24. As at 30 April 2016, the balance of the Working Capital Fund stood at \$558,876, against an approved level of \$560,000.

C. Voluntary trust fund

25. The voluntary trust fund for the participation of members of the Finance Committee and the Legal and Technical Commission from developing countries was established in 2002. Provisional terms and conditions for the use of the fund were adopted by the Assembly in 2003 and amended in 2004 (see [ISBA/9/A/5-ISBA/9/C/5](#), para. 6 and annex, and [ISBA/9/A/9](#), para. 14). The trust fund is made up of voluntary contributions from members of the Authority and others. Total contributions to the fund amount to \$614,584. The most recent contribution was made by Argentina in March 2016, in the amount of \$5,000. The balance of the voluntary trust fund as at 30 April 2016 stood at \$179,853.

D. Endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area

26. The Assembly established the endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area in 2006 (see [ISBA/12/A/11](#)). Detailed rules and procedures for the administration and utilization of the fund were adopted in 2007 (see [ISBA/13/A/6](#), annex). The fund aims to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole, in particular by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes, including through training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. The fund is administered by the secretariat. Members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations and private persons may make contributions to the fund.

27. As at 30 April 2016, the capital of the fund stood at \$3,465,815. As at the same date, a total of \$514,028 had been disbursed from the interest accrued on the capital in the form of awards for projects. Since the last session, two contributions have been received. one from the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (IFREMER) in the amount of \$2,777, and one from Mexico in the amount of \$7,500.

VIII. Satya N. Nandan Library

28. The Satya N. Nandan Library, named after the first Secretary-General of the Authority, is the main information resource for the secretariat, member States, permanent missions and other researchers seeking specialist information on the law of the sea, ocean affairs, deep seabed mining and seabed resources. Its principal objective is to service the reference and research needs of its clientele and to provide essential support for the work of the secretariat. The Authority is committed to developing the specialized research capability of the existing collection through an acquisitions programme aimed at responding to the changes in the delivery and formats of information and knowledge, building upon and strengthening the Library's comprehensive collection. In this regard, the increased budget allocation to the Library during the financial period 2015-2016 has allowed for further development of the collection, with access to additional diverse information

resources. The holdings were further augmented by generous donations from organizations and individuals. Noteworthy among the donors were the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; the United Nations Environment Programme; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO; the World Bank; the Tokyo Institute of Technology; the Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia; the Law of the Sea Institute, University of California, Berkeley; the German Advisory Council on Global Change; the United States Institute of Peace; the Planning Institute of Jamaica; and the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology of Jamaica. An individual donation was also received from David Billett, National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, United Kingdom.

29. The Library facilities available to visitors, including delegates, consist of a reading room with access to the collection for reference purposes, and computer terminals for e-mail and Internet usage. Services provided include information, reference and research support, as well as the distribution of the official documents and publications of the Authority. A project to upgrade the Library in light of new technologies available started in 2014 with an upgrade of the physical access areas. In 2015, an assessment of Library information technologies was carried out by a consultant and a procurement exercise commenced to identify an appropriate integrated cloud-based Library management services platform. It is anticipated that the system will be implemented during the 2017-2018 financial period.

30. The Library is an active member of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers and the Library and Information Association of Jamaica. In 2015, the Library formed a partnership with the library of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to join the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium. This is a system-wide libraries initiative, used through the United Nations system libraries, which generates considerable savings for participating agencies by bringing down the cost of information through a collective purchasing arrangement and shared services to online repositories.

31. The Library receives numerous requests for research assistance, many of which are submitted electronically and reflect the increasing interest in the work of the Authority at the international level. Research interest is focused on the activities of the Authority, its role, functions and future challenges, as well as on the subject areas covered by the Convention, including on the regulatory framework for seabed mining; marine scientific research; the principle of the common heritage of mankind; the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone claims; ocean governance; the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Seabed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction; the development of the mineral exploitation code; the status of, and information on, contracts for exploration; current developments in marine mineral resources and exploration; mining agreements and regulations; areas of particular environmental interest and environmental management plans for protection of the seabed. In addition, there continues to be wide interest in information on the endowment fund and on fellowship and training opportunities available through the fund. Research assistance was provided to the Commonwealth

Secretariat; South Asian University, New Delhi; the Marine Biology Research Group, Ghent University; the University of California, Santa Barbara; the Ministry of Earth Sciences, National Institute of Oceanography, India; the Associated Press; Sealight Pictures, Australia; the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil; the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, University of New South Wales; China People's Daily; the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association; the Faculty of Law and the Department of Language, Linguists and Philosophy, the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica; the Norman Manley Law School, Jamaica; the Caribbean Maritime Institute; and government bodies, including the Attorney General's Department; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; the Mines and Geology Division of the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology; the National Environment and Planning Agency; the Planning Institute of Jamaica; and the Jamaica Information Service. Requests were also received from individual researchers, academic and research institutions, embassies and permanent missions based in Jamaica and around the world.

IX. Information technology, website and public information

32. The Authority maintains an online presence through its website, which provides access to information, digital publications and official documents on a cross-browser platform. It also maintains a mobile application (ISBAHQ), Twitter (@ISBAHQ) and Facebook accounts to generate greater awareness of its work, engage with stakeholders and monitor relevant developments. A quarterly newsletter, available by digital subscription, informs the public of the Authority's work and joint efforts with other organizations. Briefing papers and technical studies provide summaries of legal and scientific workshops and seminars hosted by the Authority or jointly coordinated with other legal and scientific institutions.

33. The Information Technology Unit within the secretariat supports the substantive work of the secretariat by administering the network infrastructure and providing technical support to users.

X. Relationship with the United Nations and other relevant international organizations

34. The interrelationship between activities in the ocean makes cooperation and coordination essential between international organizations with mandates over activities in the ocean. That fact is emphasized in the Convention itself and is critical for a consistent approach that results in the comprehensive protection of the marine environment as part of the sustainable development of activities in the ocean. To that end, the secretariat has participated in a number of initiatives aimed at facilitating the exchange of information and dialogue among users of the international seabed area.

A. United Nations

35. The Authority has a close and productive working relationship with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs at

the United Nations. The Authority provided information on its activities to the twenty-sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, in June 2016. It also participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument 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. A briefing on the work of the Authority was made to the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Regional Leaders Program, held in New York, which was followed by participation of the Authority in the capacity-building workshop, held in Saint George's in May 2016. The Authority also contributed to providing information towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 69/245 on oceans and the law of the sea.

B. UN-Oceans

36. UN-Oceans is a United Nations inter-agency mechanism mandated to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations systems and activities related to ocean and coastal areas; regularly share information about the ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates, with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy; facilitate, as appropriate, inputs by its participating organizations to the annual reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries; and facilitate inter-agency information exchange, including the sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters.

37. The secretariat of the Authority is a member of UN-Oceans and participates in its meetings, as appropriate, and in accordance with its mandate. During the reporting period, the Authority participated in a number of teleconferences and contributed to discussions on the indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (c) on enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as recalled in paragraph 158 of General Assembly resolution 66/288, entitled "The future we want". The Authority also contributed to the development of the inventory of the mandates and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of the organizations participating in UN-Oceans, with a view to identifying ongoing and planned activities in respect of those mandates and priorities, and making this inventory available on the UN-Oceans website.

C. International Cable Protection Committee

38. The International Cable Protection Committee is a global organization representing the telecommunications and cable-laying industry. It was established in 1958 to promote the safeguarding of submarine cables against man-made and natural hazards, and to provide a forum for the exchange of technical and legal information pertaining to submarine cable protection methods and programmes, including exchanging information on the location of existing and proposed cables. In 2009, members of the Authority noted that, while the laying of submarine cables is a freedom of the high seas, it was in the interests of both the Authority and the members of the Committee to cooperate to avoid potential conflicts between the

laying of cables and activities in the Area (see [ISBA/16/A/INF/1](#), para. 2). It was further noted that both organizations also had a strong interest in the protection of the marine environment from adverse impacts arising from their respective activities. A memorandum of understanding setting out the scope and purpose of cooperation between the two organizations was concluded in 2010. The Committee has since attended and participated in annual sessions of the Authority. The Authority was represented at the 2016 Committee plenary meeting, held in Hamburg, Germany, from 12 to 14 April 2016 and, on its part, the Committee is organizing a side event for delegates to the twenty-second session of the Authority in order to provide further information on its work.

D. International Hydrographic Organization

39. During the reporting period, consultations regarding the utility of charting exploration areas under contract with the Authority, in order to show the presence of cables, were undertaken by the Authority and the International Hydrographic Organization. As a result, the President of the Directing Committee of the International Hydrographic Bureau, which is the permanent secretariat of the International Hydrographic Organization, and the Secretary-General of the Authority, agreed to establish and conclude a suitable arrangement for a mutually beneficial relationship between the two organizations. A draft agreement of cooperation between the International Hydrographic Organization and the Authority to improve common knowledge and understanding, and to facilitate the mapping of the sea floor in the Area for the common benefit of humankind was jointly drafted by the secretariat of the two organizations and is being submitted to the Council for approval during the twenty-second session. This initiative is particularly relevant in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and provides support for the long-standing aims of the International Hydrographic Organization and the regime governing activities in the Area.

E. OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic

40. As encouraged by several delegations of the Council (see [ISBA/21/C/21](#) para. 28), dialogue between the Authority and the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic² during the reporting period focused on progress made on issues associated with the status of the collective arrangement between competent international organizations on cooperation and coordination in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic (“the collective arrangement”). The collective arrangement, which is a non-binding instrument, was intended to serve as a platform to facilitate dialogue and the exchange of information. The arrangement provides a framework for cooperation between competent sectoral organizations regarding selected areas beyond national jurisdiction

² The OSPAR Commission and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, a regional fishery management organization established by the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in North-East Atlantic Fisheries of 1980, signed a memorandum of understanding in August and September 2008. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the European Union are members of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission. They are also members of the Authority.

in the North-East Atlantic that are subject to specific environmental management measures. In March 2016, the OSPAR Commission and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission invited the Authority to participate in the second meeting under the collective arrangement, held in London. Although the secretariat of the Authority was not able to be represented at that meeting, it submitted a written statement on matters of mutual interest. Developing a functioning dialogue between the Authority and the OSPAR Commission and other competent international organizations with international legal competence for managing human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction would be useful in demonstrating the value of a regional approach, where such competent organizations exist, highlighting where there are shared objectives for the sustainable use of the oceans.

F. International Maritime Organization

41. At its twenty-first session, in July 2015, the Council of the Authority approved the text of an Agreement of Cooperation between the Authority and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The Council of IMO had previously approved the text of such an Agreement at its one hundred and fourteenth session, held in London from 29 June to 3 July 2015. The Assembly of IMO, at its twenty-ninth session, held from 23 November to 3 December 2015, approved the Agreement. The Agreement was signed by the Secretary-General of IMO on 8 December 2015 and by the Secretary-General of the Authority on 8 March 2016. Under the Agreement, IMO and the Authority agreed that they will, inter alia, consult one another on matters of common interest, with a view to ensuring maximum coordination of their respective work and activities, and will send representatives to observe meetings or conferences convened under the auspices of the two respective organizations and to consult on matters of personnel, material, services, equipment and facilities for joint undertakings in fields of common interest to both organizations.

G. Pacific Community

42. Also during the twenty-first session, the Assembly approved the observer status of the Pacific Community to replace the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission. At the same session, the Council approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Authority and the Pacific Community. Currently, the Pacific Community counts 26 member States and territories; 17 of the member States are also members of the Authority, namely, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

XI. Previous session of the Authority

43. The twenty-first session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston from 13 to 24 July 2015, and comprised its 150th to 154th meetings. At its 151st and 152nd meetings, on 21 July, and its 153rd meeting, on 22 July, the Assembly considered and debated the annual report of the Secretary-General of the Authority, submitted in compliance with article 166, paragraph 4, of

the Convention. At its 152nd meeting, the Assembly considered the terms of reference for the periodic review of the international regime of the Area and decided, among other things, to undertake, pursuant to article 154 of the Convention, a general and systematic review of the manner in which the international regime of the Area had operated in practice. It also decided that such a review would be carried out with the oversight of a review committee comprising the President and the Bureau of the Assembly, and the President of the Council, with the current President of the Assembly remaining on the committee until the completion of the review. Chairs of regional groups might also participate in the committee as observers. The Assembly also decided that the review would be conducted by consultants appointed by the review committee, based on a shortlist of qualified consultants prepared by the Secretary-General in accordance with the established procurement procedures of the Authority.

44. The Council adopted its agenda during its 202nd meeting, on 13 July. During the session, the Council considered, inter alia, the status of contracts for exploration in the Area (see [ISBA/21/C/8/Rev.1](#)), the status of national legislation relating to deep seabed mining, the report and recommendations of the Finance Committee, and the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission. The Council also considered an application for the approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules submitted by the China Minmetals Corporation. Acting on the recommendation of the Commission, the Council approved the application and requested the Secretary-General to issue the plan of work in the form of a contract between the Authority and the China Minmetals Corporation.

45. At its 212th meeting, the Council adopted a decision relating to the procedures and criteria for the extension of an approved plan of work for exploration. The procedures and criteria for extension are set out in the annex to the decision of the Council contained in document [ISBA/21/C/19](#). The Council noted with appreciation the Commission's work on the framework for the exploitation regulations and requested the Commission to continue its work on exploitation regulations as a matter of priority. The Council endorsed the Commission's list of priority deliverables for the development of the exploitation regulations over the following 12 to 18 months. These deliverables are set out in annex III to the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission ([ISBA/21/C/16](#)).

XII. Status of exploration and exploitation in the Area

46. As at 31 May 2016, 24 contracts for exploration had entered into force (15 for polymetallic nodules, 5 for polymetallic sulphides and 4 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts). Since the twenty-first session, two new contracts have been signed. On 9 November 2015, a contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts with the Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais was signed in Brasilia and on 29 March 2016, a second contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules was signed in New York with UK Seabed Resources Ltd. A contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules with the Cook Islands Investment Corporation will be signed on 24 June 2016. It is anticipated that pending contracts with India and with the China Minmetals Corporation will be signed during 2016.

47. As at 16 December 2015, applications for extension of approved plans of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules had been received from the following six

contractors: the Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, Yuzhmoregeologiya, the Government of the Republic of Korea, the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association, the Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd and the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer. Each contractor requested an extension of five years.

48. Applications for extensions of approved plans of work for exploration are considered by the Legal and Technical Commission pursuant to the procedures and criteria adopted by the Council at the twenty-first session (ISBA/21/C/19). The Commission is required to submit its report and recommendations on each such application to the Council at the first possible opportunity, which would be July 2016. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of section 1 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, and paragraph 12 of the procedures and criteria, the Commission shall recommend approval of the application for extension of the contract for exploration if it considers that the contractor has made efforts in good faith to comply with the requirements of the contract for exploration but, for reasons beyond the contractor's control, has been unable to complete the necessary preparatory work for proceeding to the exploitation stage, or if the prevailing economic circumstances do not justify proceeding to the exploitation stage.

XIII. Progressive development of the regulatory regime for activities in the Area

49. The Authority has a fundamental role to play in ensuring that an appropriate regulatory regime is established, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, which provides adequate security of tenure for future exploration for, and exploitation of, the mineral resources of the Area, while ensuring effective protection for the marine environment. The regulatory regime would ultimately be encapsulated in a mining code, which would comprise the whole of the comprehensive set of rules, regulations and procedures issued by the Authority to regulate prospecting, exploration and exploitation of marine minerals in the Area.

A. Prospecting and exploration

50. The mining code currently consists of three sets of regulations covering prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules (ISBA/19/C/17, annex), polymetallic sulphides (ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex) and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts (ISBA/18/A/11, annex). In addition to specifying the process through which contracts may be applied for and granted, the regulations set out the standard terms and conditions, applicable to all entities, of contracts with the Authority. The regulations are supplemented by recommendations for the guidance of contractors issued by the Legal and Technical Commission. At present, recommendations that have been issued by the Commission include:

(a) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States relating to training programmes under plans of work for exploration (ISBA/19/LTC/14);

(b) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area (ISBA/19/LTC/8);

(c) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the reporting of actual and direct exploration expenditure (ISBA/21/LTC/11);

(d) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors on the content, format and structure of annual reports (ISBA/21/LTC/15).

B. Exploitation

51. Building upon the work that commenced in 2014, the Legal and Technical Commission continued its work on the formulation of the draft regulation for the exploitation of marine mineral resources in the Area during the reporting period. The Commission discussed a number of high-level issues that would have an impact on the strategic approach taken with regard to the development of the exploitation regulations, together with definitions and a number of practical issues affecting the operationalization of the exploitation regime. The areas of risk assessment and management and the implementation of internationally recognized standards were identified as fundamental to the orderly development of the industry and its regulation and would require a more detailed understanding of proposed operations. The Commission took note of a discussion paper prepared by the secretariat and external consultants concerning the development of a payment mechanism for exploitation activities in the Area.

52. As part of its continued work, the Commission discussed the responses to the suggested draft framework, high-level issues and action plan issued to stakeholders in March 2015. It considered that the draft framework had been well received by stakeholders and would serve as a good basis to provide direction to the drafting of the exploitation regulations. The Commission issued a revised draft framework and action plan, taking account comments by stakeholders. That document is available on the Authority's website (<http://bit.ly/1K4Bmrc>).

53. Also during the reporting period, the Commission identified seven priority deliverables for the next 12 to 18 months. These deliverables were reflected in annex III to the report of the Chair of the Commission (ISBA/21/C/16) and included the preparation of a zero draft of the exploitation regulations as well as standard contract terms. The Commission noted that a complete exploitation code, including guidelines and recommendations, would evolve over time as more data and information became available and that the delivery of a complete exploitation code would have material implications for the budget for the next biennium (2017-2018) and beyond. In conjunction with the secretariat, the Commission would aim to develop a fully costed plan and timeline by July 2016. In terms of a continued commitment to transparency and engagement, the Commission requested the secretariat to draft a stakeholder consultation and participation strategy for the Authority, which was done in January 2016.

C. National laws and regulations relating to deep seabed mining

54. At the seventeenth session of the Authority, in 2011, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the laws, regulations and administrative measures adopted by sponsoring States and other members of the Authority with regard to activities in the Area, and invited, for that purpose, sponsoring States and other members of the Authority, as appropriate, to provide the secretariat with information on, or the texts of, relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures (see [ISBA/17/C/20](#), para. 3). Subsequently, the secretariat established an online database of the information on, or the texts of, national laws, regulations and administrative measures that had been submitted to it and submitted an annual report on the status of such national legislation to the Council ([ISBA/18/C/8](#) and Add.1, [ISBA/20/C/12](#), [ISBA/20/C/11](#) and Corr.1 and Add.1, and [ISBA/21/C/7](#)).

55. As at 31 May 2016, the following States had provided information on, or the texts of, relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures: Belgium, China, Cook Islands, Czech Republic, Fiji, France, Germany, Guyana, India, Japan, Mexico, Nauru, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Niue, Oman, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Tonga, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Zambia. A submission was also received from the secretariat of the Pacific Community, on behalf of the Pacific Islands region.

XIV. Workshops and seminars

56. Since 1998, the Authority has convened a number of international workshops on scientific and technical matters in order to provide it with the best available scientific advice for the formulation of rules, regulations and procedures for managing activities in the Area. The workshops are an important mechanism for the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area and a platform for collaboration with contractors and the international scientific community.

57. Workshops are important for the standardization of the data and information required for the assessment of the environmental impact of activities in the Area and the environmental management of the large provinces of mineral wealth in the Area. With regard to the mineral resources themselves, workshops are an important tool to apprise the international community of the maturity of the efforts to convert the resources of the Area, the common heritage of mankind, into the financial assets they represent. Workshops are also an important mechanism for the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area, for providing an opportunity for contractors and applied scientists to exchange ideas and for serving as a platform for the identification of gaps in the knowledge base required to sustainably undertake exploitation in the Area, which could be better addressed through collaboration among contractors and with the international scientific community. During 2015 and 2016, the Authority convened three workshops on measures to protect and preserve the environment from activities in the Area and two workshops on contractor efforts to proceed to convert polymetallic nodules into the financial assets that they are.

A. Workshops on taxonomic classification standardization

58. The Authority has, since 2013, conducted a series of workshops for the standardization of the procedures and methodologies for taxonomic classification of the fauna in the Area. The aims of the workshops were to inter-calibrate the available taxonomic data, to develop contractor capacity in faunal identifications using the recommended standards, to create geographic databases of species distributions based on the standardized data and to inform prospectors, potential exploration contractors and marine researching institutions of the preferred nomenclatures and procedures for faunal identifications.

59. The first in the series of such workshops was convened at the German Centre for Marine Biodiversity Research of the Senckenberg Institute in Wilhelmshaven, Germany, from 10 to 15 June 2013. It focused on the evaluation of and difficulties encountered in assessing megafaunal biodiversity and provided contractors for polymetallic nodules with a means to classify all megafaunal species so far identified in their exploration areas and for all future observations using a standardized taxonomy to allow comparison between fauna in different exploration areas, and to enable better environmental management. Megafauna are defined as organisms large enough to be determined on photographs, typically larger than 1 centimetre in size. The main taxonomic groups analysed in this workshop were: fish, holothurians, asteroids, crinoids, ophiuriids, cnidarians and protists, together with crustaceans, cephalopod mollusks and sponges.

60. The second workshop in the series was convened at the East Sea Research Institute of the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST) in Uljin, Republic of Korea, from 23 to 30 November 2014. It focused on the evaluation of and difficulties encountered in assigning macrofaunal biodiversity (classified to species level) and provided contractors for polymetallic nodules with a means to classify all macrofaunal species so far identified in their exploration areas and for all future observations using a standardized taxonomy to allow comparison between fauna in different exploration areas, and to enable better environmental management.

61. The last in the series of workshops was convened at the Marine Biology Research Group, Ghent University, in Ghent, Belgium, from 14 to 17 December 2015, and was co-hosted by Ghent University and Global Sea Mineral Resources BV, the Belgian contractor. It focused on the evaluation of and difficulties encountered in assigning meiofaunal diversity (classified to species level) and provided contractors for polymetallic nodules with a means to use applicable standards with regard to all megafaunal, macrofaunal and meiofaunal species so far identified in their exploration areas and for all future observations and to allow comparison between fauna in different exploration areas, and to enable better environmental management.

62. The main recommendations that came out of the foregoing workshops were submitted to the Legal and Technical Commission for consideration, as follows:

(a) Enforce the collection of molecular data (reverse taxonomy, barcoding) in the Area to provide connectivity across the Area, in particular the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone;

(b) Ensure the highest resolution in taxonomy, that is, species level, and ensure that taxonomic nomenclature follows the World Register of Marine Species standards;

(c) Increase efforts towards capacity-building by producing online atlases and catalogues to illustrate the dominant morphotypes found in the Area;

(d) Develop new protocols and regulations for the collection and processing of environmental DNA to integrate eDNA into the sampling regimes of all the contractors.

63. The secretariat is currently building two new atlases for the macrofauna and meiofauna of the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone. The purpose of these atlases is to support the work of contractors in their taxonomic classification as well as to promote biodiversity knowledge among the scientific community and general public. The Authority, in collaboration with the International Network for Scientific Investigation of Deep-Sea Ecosystems (INDEEP) and contractors, has already generated an online atlas for megafauna in the Zone (http://ccfzatlases.com/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page).

64. In response to the findings and recommendations of the workshops on taxonomic classification standardization, the secretariat is now exploring new ways of assessing and monitoring marine diversity, including the application of genomic tools for biomonitoring of the marine environment. In May 2016, in collaboration with the Swiss Network for International Studies and other scientific institutions, the secretariat started the first research programme for assessing deep-sea environmental impact based on the next generation sequencing (NGS) — metabarcoding approach for environmental monitoring of marine ecosystems.

B. Sensitization seminars

65. As a capacity-building and outreach initiative, the Authority has also, over the years, organized sensitization seminars aimed at bringing together experts from the international legal and scientific community with national and regional government officials, scientists, researchers and academics to discuss scientific research on marine minerals and propose mechanisms for improving regional cooperation in scientific research and marine mineral development. Topics covered at the seminars include the status of the legal regimes established for the recovery of minerals, the types of minerals found in the Area, resource evaluation, protection and preservation of the marine environment from prospecting, exploration and mining, and capacity-building. Previous sensitization seminars have been held in Manado, Indonesia (2007), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2008), Abuja (2009), Madrid (2010), Kingston (2011), Mexico City (2013) and at United Nations Headquarters in New York (2010, 2012, 2014). In 2015, the Authority held two sensitization seminars, the first in South Africa (March) and the second in Chile (November).

XV. Data management strategy

66. The Legal and Technical Commission, in its report to the Council in 2015, requested the secretariat to provide a draft data management strategy and the financial implications of its implementation (ISBA/21/C/16, para. 36). In response to that request, a document was prepared by a working group of the Commission and, subsequently, with the assistance of a consulting firm, that presents a summary of the preliminary review of the current data management arrangement by the secretariat. The Commission formed a working group on data management strategy

during its February 2016 session. The working group conducted a preliminary review of the current data and information management arrangements and of the existing hardware and infrastructure supporting the arrangements. With regard to the secretariat, it noted that in the current management system, data and information were stored in four places, namely, a secure vault for the initial registering and physical storage, a server that was divided between the public Authority website and the Commission secure website, a stand-alone computer with a geographic information system and a stand-alone computer with several software packages for handling biological/environmental data.

67. The working group also noted that there was no direct link between the four units; all uploading to the server was manual. Data were imported into the stand-alone units not as a routine, but according to day to day needs, and the transfer of data from the biological/environmental stand-alone site to the geographic information system was performed manually. Finally, it noted that the basic archiving function, that is, bookkeeping, searching and retrieving of data and information, was also performed manually based on the content of the physical storage (vault). A selection of the information might be retrieved from the websites, but their content relied on the subjective choices of the individual webmasters and did not necessarily reflect the needs of the users. No one person seemed to be designated to be in charge of overall data management.

68. The working group concluded with the following observations. The International Seabed Authority must implement the routines and technical means to take care of all data and information in a structured manner consistent with all the needs of the functions of the Authority, which included the basic archiving needs and all the relevant uses of the data and information. Moreover, a staff member in the position of data manager was needed to keep such a system working; more than one geographic information system officer was needed to prevent the system from becoming vulnerable; and staff computers should be upgraded according to their use and function.

69. With regard to setting up the strategy, the working group noted that the procedure comprised priority steps and progressive implementation aspects, in particular: the review of current arrangements for the use of data by the Authority in the monitoring and evaluation of contractors' activities; the definition of an Authority model of data management; the determination of the type of technology and related infrastructure to be used to implement the plan; the definition of a timeline showing the sequences of the implementation plan and the related financial evaluation; setting up of the Authority's ameliorated system of data and information tools; elaboration of policies and procedures for accessibility and a definition of the level of accessibility to the information by other stakeholders (external to the Authority).

70. The working group noted that the internal uses of the Authority (review of current arrangements for the use of data by the Authority, definition of an Authority model of data management, selection of the type of technology and infrastructure to implement the plan and their financial implications) would have first priority and that external uses would follow.

71. The consultant's terms of reference were focused on the first priority. The consultant concluded that the quality and quantity of data collected by the contractors was highly variable; much of the historical data were available only as

tables or figures in the reports; submissions of historical data lacked key metadata; to date, only few contractors were submitting digital information (Excel, shapefiles) with their annual reports; there was no web-based infrastructure for the contractors to submit their data online. The consultant noted that the technical infrastructure in place at the Authority was a collection of older physical servers, aged switching and previous-generation server operating systems; the overall environment had reached the end of its life cycle and was in need of replacement. Current generation concepts such as virtualization for added management efficiency; and flexibility, security, reliance and performance should be implemented.

72. The consultant also observed that the Authority required a data manager to ensure that the confidential status of the data was maintained; the contents of data submitted complied with requirements; data were correctly catalogued relative to the metadata and; the database was regularly updated, as required, and kept current.

73. The consultant recommended that, in addition to the existing data management policies, the following should be considered in the data management plan: a time limit on confidentiality (to be agreed upon when the new data management model was in place); a database model that must be able to answer basic questions in support of the Authority's mission, including estimating mineable areas, as well as evaluating the environmental impacts of resource exploitation; the model must enable a user to easily summarize the volume and summary content of data collected by the Authority and incorporated into the database (e.g., metadata); the model must have a clear, published and adhered to set of data standards.

74. Regarding the database model, the consultant recommended that the model should: enforce valid values for standards generated for fields such as chemical names and units, species names and DNA taxonomy, which would enable accurate and complete querying; document and enforce established geographic standards; and include the storage and retrieval framework for non-structured data (e.g., photos, videos, scanned graphics), which would be geo-referenced (if applicable). Considering the geographic focus of the project, a spatial database (or geodatabase) was recommended as the database engine for the project. The existing infrastructure required upgrading in order to support the strategy. The recommendation was to use virtual servers wherever possible. Not only did a virtual environment provide far more flexibility than a physical environment, but it was also generally more cost-effective. An enterprise-grade virtual environment was recommended.

75. The consultant provided a schedule of 19 months to implement the first phase as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission. With regard to the first phase, it is proposed that the Authority undertake the commitment to implement the data management strategy as recommended by both the Commission working group and the external consultant. This will include appointing a consultant and other temporary staff to enable execution of the phase as recommended. During the biennium 2017-2018, the secretariat will systematically execute the following nine tasks recommended to meet the goals of the data management strategy: (a) project initiation; (b) data management plan; (c) information technology design, acquisition and deployment; (d) information technology installation and training; (e) database and user interface development; (f) data migration; (g) database implementation, testing and training; (h) documentation; and (i) first-year implementation support. The execution of each of the tasks will ensure that the secretariat has a data management plan in place by the end of 2018 and fit for purpose, and thus fulfils its

mandates accordingly. The implementation of the data management strategy requires two new posts, a data manager (Professional) and a data entry officer (General Service), as recommended by the consultant and the working group. The new posts would be budgeted under the human resources established posts item of the Authority.

XVI. Capacity development and training

76. There are two main ways in which the Authority seeks to carry out its responsibilities under articles 143 and 144 of the Convention to promote marine scientific research in the Area and build the capacity of developing States in deep-sea research and technology: the training programmes provided by contractors as part of the contracts for exploration in the Area, and the endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area. The Authority publicized its internship programme in 2014. In addition, since 2011, it has been a host institution under the United Nations-Nippon Foundation of Japan Fellowship Programme for Human Resources Development and Advancement of the Legal Order of the World's Oceans, administered by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

A. Contractor training

77. Contractors with the Authority have a legal obligation to provide and fund training opportunities for trainees from developing States and the Authority. From 2013 to date, a total of 45 training places were provided by nine contractors. The types of training include at-sea training, engineering training, fellowship training, master's and PhD programmes and workshop internship.

78. Among the selected trainees, 16 were from the African group (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, the Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia), 14 were from the Asia-Pacific group (Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand), one was from the Eastern European group (Georgia) and 14 were from the Latin American and Caribbean group (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Jamaica and Mexico). Fourteen of the 45 trainees were female.

79. Since July 2011, a total of 17 exploration contracts have been signed with the Authority, 3 approved plans of work are to be signed in the form of contracts and 1 new application was received in May 2016, which will be considered by the Commission at its meetings in July 2016. If all existing and new contracts, approved plans of work pending signature of contract and extended contracts were implemented pursuant to the recommendations made by the Commission in respect of training programmes, in particular the recommendation that no fewer than 10 training places should be provided in each five-year work programme, it could be expected that about 200 training places would be made available by contractors from 2016 to 2020.

B. Endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area

80. The endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area aims to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole, in particular by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes and offering them opportunities to participate in training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. Pursuant to the agreed procedures, an advisory panel was appointed by the Secretary-General in 2014 to evaluate applications for assistance from the fund and make recommendations to the Secretary-General.

81. In 2015, with the award of \$14,880 from the endowment fund, INDEEP enabled six young scientists (from Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago) to attend the fourteenth Deep-sea Biology Symposium, held in Aveiro, Portugal, from 30 August to 4 September 2015. An award to the Rhodes Academy of Ocean Law and Policy enabled five candidates (from Indonesia, Greece, Fiji, Bulgaria and India) to attend its summer session. An award to the Marco Polo-Zheng He Academy of International Oceans Law and Policy enabled six candidates (from Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Thailand, Turkey and the Russian Federation) to attend its 2015 session.

82. In May 2016, INDEEP reported that resources from the endowment fund had enabled it to invite 28 participants from Namibia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritania and Angola to attend a capacity-building workshop on “Biodiversity and connectivity of deep-sea ecosystems in areas targeted by deep-sea mining”, organized by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Namibia in Swakopmund, Namibia, from 11 to 21 April 2016. Participants had been introduced to benthic environments and the associated fauna, the history of deep-sea exploration, animal-sediment interactions, human impacts, sampling and sampling design, metrics used in the characterization of the benthos, ecosystem function and services, life-histories, larval dispersal and connectivity, consideration of mining impacts, management strategies and governance.

83. Awards were also made to the Rhodes Academy and the Marco Polo-Zheng He Academy for 2016, although at a lower level than in previous years. In making its recommendations for 2016, the panel expressed concern about the low level of contributions to the endowment fund in recent years and suggested that the Authority should consider playing the role of a window for scientific research activities in the Area by soliciting projects designed to benefit scientists from developing countries and then seeking financial support targeted at such projects.

84. As at 20 May 2016, a total of 111 scientists or government officials from 45 countries have been beneficiaries of financial support from the endowment fund. The recipients were from Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Egypt, Fiji, Greece, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia, Namibia, Nigeria, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey and Viet Nam.

85. The secretariat will continue to take steps to generate interest in the endowment fund on the part of potential donors and institutional partners. In this regard, it is noted that, in paragraph 61 of its resolution 70/235, the General Assembly expressed its appreciation to States that have made contributions to the endowment fund and encouraged States to make additional contributions to the fund. It is also noted that during its twenty-first session, in its decision relating to financial and budgetary matters (ISBA/21/C/18), the Council of the Authority strongly encouraged members of the Authority to make voluntary contributions to the fund. The endowment fund is one of the principal mechanisms for enabling capacity-building in the field of marine scientific research in the deep ocean and the Secretary-General wishes to encourage members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and private persons to contribute to it.

C. Internship

86. The purpose of the internship programme is twofold: (a) to provide a framework through which students and young government officials from diverse academic backgrounds gain exposure to the work and functions of the Authority in order to enhance their educational experience and/or gain experience in the work of the Authority; and (b) to enable the Authority to benefit from the assistance of qualified students and young government officials specialized in various skills within the scope of activities of the Authority. The Authority accepts interns on a limited basis, depending on the specific needs of respective offices and their capacity to effectively support, accommodate and supervise the interns.

87. Interns are responsible, where appropriate, for obtaining the necessary visas and arranging their travel to and from Kingston, as well as accommodation and travel in Kingston. They are not financially remunerated by the Authority. Costs and arrangements for travel, visas, accommodation and living expenses are the responsibility of the interns or their sponsoring institutions. The Authority accepts no responsibility for the medical insurance of the interns or costs arising from injury, illness or death that may occur during an internship. Applicants for internship must show proof of valid medical insurance to cover the full period of the internship at the duty station and provide a medical certificate of good health prior to the commencement of the internship. The Authority accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to personal effects that may occur during the internship. After the completion of the internship, the Authority will issue certificates to the interns.

XVII. Relations with the host country

88. The Authority continues to enjoy cordial relations with the host country. As a result of the general election held in February 2016, there was a change of Government in Jamaica. The Authority expects continued close collaboration with the new Government of Jamaica, a privilege it has enjoyed for the past two decades.