

## **African Group's intervention on Item 10 Implementation of the strategic plan**

**24 July 2019**

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports contained in document ISBA/25/A/5 and ISBA/25/A/6, as well as its note on a Draft high-level action plan of the International Seabed Authority for the period 2019–2023 contained in document ISBA/25/A/L.2.

Last year, we have adopted the ISA Strategic Plan for 2019-2023. Before the draft Strategic Plan was prepared by the Secretariat, the African Group provided a submission in April 2018 containing our comments what such a strategic plan should look like. During the consideration of this issue by the Assembly last year, we have expressed our appreciation regarding the process of open consultations on the draft Strategic Plan.

In adopting the ISA Strategic Plan, this Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a high-level action plan and to include key performance indicators and a list of outputs for the next five years.

Paragraph 5 of document ISBA/25/A/6 refers to “business plan”. We would like to understand what does terminology means? Whether is it the budgetary implications?

Regarding document ISBA/25/A/L.2 on the Draft high-level action plan of the ISA for the period 2019–2023, the African Group has five comments:

First, regarding high-level action 1.2.3. aiming to "Establish partnerships to foster cooperation, consistent with the Convention and international law, with relevant international organizations on matters of mutual interest, and provide relevant input and guidance." We propose to add after organizations « and regional organizations like the African Union ».

This amendment is to align high-level action 1.2.3 with strategic direction 1.2.

Second, regarding high-level action 2.1.3. proposing to Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved, in particular among the Authority, sponsoring States and flag States. We are happy to see this action reflected in the high-level action.

In previous occasions, including last week at the Council, the African Group welcomed the commitment of the secretariat to providing matrices of responsibilities to show the interfaces between the Authority and the sponsoring States, and between the Authority and flag States, as contained in document ISBA/25/C/CRP.1, para. 19. As we have underlined in our submission on liability contained in document ISBA/25/C/25, the African Group requests that those matrices incorporate liabilities and we look forward to considering these matrices as soon as possible. We have noticed in the output related to action 2.1.3 that time frame for completion is 2021. We hope that the study on the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved will be released before next meeting of the Council in order to take its findings into consideration during our next deliberations on the draft exploitations regulations.

Third, we appreciate that a number of high-level actions related to developing countries are associated with outputs, like high level action 1.4.2 suggesting as output to report on the specific challenges faced by developing States in implementing relevant international legal instruments governing activities in the Area, as well as action 6.3.1 suggesting as an output to develop a network of entities providing training opportunities for personnel from developing States.

Fourth, Reference to non-confidential information is made in a number of high-level action: 3.3.1, 4.4.2. and 9.2.1. We are wondering whether « confidential information » is defined? Otherwise, who will define or decide confidentiality of information: the Assembly, the Council, the LTC, or the Secretary-General? In the most recent draft exploitation regulations, Part IX on Information-gathering and handling includes Draft Regulation 89 on Confidentiality of information. The draft high-level action plan is meant to be adopted during this week, while the exploitation regulations at the earliest in one year. We would appreciate any clarification on this matter.

Fifth and last, high-level action 5.1.1. suggests assisting developing States, in particular small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, in identifying their needs. We would like to remind and underline that the Montego Bay Convention contains a specific categorization of countries, including references to geographically disadvantaged States. For this reason, we propose to add this category of countries in the list proposed in high-level action 5.1.1.

Before concluding, we concur with the fact that Performance Indicators will continue to be refined and perhaps even reduced in number over time, as they are reported on and used by the Authority. For this reason, we won't propose amendments to Annex II on related outputs.