

Bangladesh Statement at the International Seabed Authority on Agenda item 8- Report of the Secretary General at the Assembly of the 23rd Annual Session

Thank you, Mr. President,

Having listened attentively to the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General, the Bangladesh delegation sincerely congratulates the Secretary General and wishes to register its satisfaction for the activities in the Area. We also commend the staff of the Authority under the leadership of the Secretary-General for their dedicated and sincere efforts over the past year in organizing and controlling activities in the Area so as to administer the resources of the Area in an effective and efficient manner. Bangladesh has noted with great interest the proactive position taken by the Secretary General and would like to commend the Secretary General for identifying the main focused areas of the Authority-like processing of applications and supervisory functions, adopting rules, regulations, regulatory frameworks for protection and preservation of marine environments, monitoring trends and developments of world metal markets conditions, promotion and encouragement of MSR and information gathering and development of unique databases to better understand the deep ocean environment.

We note that the Authority's main responsibility to approve and issue contracts to qualified entities to explore for or exploit deep sea mineral resources. As of 2017, 27 exploration contracts for exploration of Polymetallic nodules, polymetallic Sulphides and cobalt rich crusts, covering approximately one million square kilometers of the seafloor in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans have been issued and this year Authority is going add another exploration contract.

We do understand that these exploration contracts could change the direction of development from land centric towards the hidden resources of the sea. Specially at a time where the global reserves of metals and minerals are fast dwindling, Bangladesh sees the potential for deep seabed mining to provide a new source of minerals in the future. At the same time as a developing state, we are fully cognizant of how changes in the in the seabed mining could guide us to a new era and wish the Secretary general to continue his work determinedly to ensure important safeguards for the protection of the marine environment from harmful effects as well as exploitation of resources from the Area in the future as well.

Mr. President

Bangladesh has noted with great interest the proactive position adopted by the Authority in receiving time sensitive annual reports, carrying out technical review for the LTC, encouraging contractors to submit programme of activities, meeting the contractors regularly, arranging contractors' briefings on the status of development of mining and processing technology, training programmes under plans of work for exploration and allocation of training opportunities, applications for approval of plans of work for exploration in the Seabed Area and preparation of draft regulations for exploitation in the Area, monopolization of activities in the Area, conflict of interest of and data management strategy of the Authority.

It is also praiseworthy that following the decision of the council, authority took initiative to collect information on relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures from the sponsoring and potential sponsoring states that may wish to participate in deep seabed mining. Bangladesh encourages to continue to organise more technical workshops, sensitization seminars and appreciate its efforts on strengthening and coordination of international cooperation in marine scientific research.

Bangladesh acknowledges the fact that it is not possible to establish the geographic limits of the Area with any certainty until the limits of national jurisdiction are established, which includes a precise delineation of all areas of continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline. In this regard, article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention requires coastal States to give due publicity to charts or lists of geographical coordinates of the outer limit lines of the continental shelf and, in the case of those extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline, to deposit a copy of such charts or lists with the Secretary-General of the Authority. This is an important provision, which is designed to facilitate the effective administration of the Area for the benefit of all States. Unfortunately to date, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has adopted only 26 sets of recommendations to coastal States out of about 80 recommendations. Out of that only 7 members states have so far deposited such limits of outer limits of the CS to the Authority. Bangladesh would urge upon the member states to consider depositing such charts on limits and we would remind the great admirers of CLCS to urge the CLCS in New York to complete their assigned task on the remaining submissions so that the Authority can start to identify its Areas which it could not do so even after two decades of its existence. Due to excessive delay by the CLCS, the Authority cannot also initiate steps in implementing payment and contribution as per art 82 of the UNCLOS.

Mr. President

Capacity-building lies at the core of States' abilities particularly developing countries, to benefit fully from the oceans and their resources and to comply with the range of obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and its associated legal instruments. It is therefore of great concern to us that, comprehensive assessment should be carried out at the global level of the capacity-building needs of States in relation to the ocean affairs and the law of the sea. It is our fervent hope that this will be addressed urgently.

Bangladesh believes that the Endowment fund for Marine Scientific Research meant 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 programmes and offering them the opportunity to participate in training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. We are happy to note that two of our scientist have been selected and trained for the first time with JOGMEC and COMRA respectively.

Bangladesh would like to draw the attention of the Authority about the requirement of the convention to develop international research programmes in marine scientific research for

the benefit of developing States and technologically less developed States, with a view to strengthening their research capabilities, training their personnel and fostering the employment of their qualified personnel. Here we would strongly urge upon the Secretariat to be more attentive to make arrangement with universities, scientific institutions and other entities of the developing countries so that more scientists could participate in marine scientific activities through endowment fund.

Mr. President,

It was heartening to see that the ISA has become integrated with the goals of the healthy oceans SDG, UN Ocean Conference, the work of the UN Ocean system, participating in the common system of the UN and also comprehensive review of the compensation package of the common system. We would urge the authority to continue its efforts to find cost savings in its regular budget including efforts to reduce conference servicing costs.

On another subject we have taken note of Art 154 of the Convention requires the ISA to undertake every five years a general and systematic review of the manner in which it conducts its business. Consequently we recommended that the Secretariat be requested to prepare a terms of reference for a systematic review of the Authority at the 21st Annual session. We are happy to state that the final meeting of the Review Committee was held in Jan 2017 and 17 sets of recommendations have been finalized.

There is no doubt that the ISA has achieved some significant milestones and exercised as the central authority for the organization and control of activities.

Interest in the development of marine minerals in the deep seabed continues to grow and has resulted in a significant increase in the workload of the Authority over the past year. Technical aspects of exploration contracts are becoming increasingly complex. State parties may now consider putting additional resources so that the authority can perform these tasks with efficiency towards establishment of an environmental baseline against which to assess the impacts of mining on the marine environment.

Bangladesh also welcomes Azerbaijan and Ghana acceding to the Convention and the 1994 Agreement making it the 168th member of the authority. In keeping with the welcome note of the Secretary-General for establishment of permanent missions to the authority as an essential link between the organization and its member states, Bangladesh has opened a non-resident permanent mission in Jamaica to maintain functional presence at or near the seat of the organization.

On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh May I extend our appreciation to the Government of Jamaica for its continued support, in hosting this meeting as well as, their warm hospitality provided to us during the 20th session.

Mr. President, I wish to assure all members of the Authority of the continued support of the Government of Bangladesh for the work of this important institution as it is working to ensure exploitation of resources in the common heritage of mankind.

I thank you, Mr. President.