

Statement by the Chinese Delegation at the Assembly of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the  
International Seabed Authority under the Item “Periodic Review”

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation would like to thank Mr. Tuerk, Chairman of the Review Committee, for his detailed introduction to the report of the committee. We would also like to thank Mr. Lodge, the Secretary-General, for his comments on the report.

The Periodic Review under Article 154 of the Convention is an important institutional arrangement for the monitoring of the implementation of the international seabed regime. It is of great importance to the promotion of the effective implementation as well as development and improvement of the international seabed regime established by the Convention. The Periodic Review that started in 2015 was the first such review since the coming into force of the Convention. Thanks to the joint effort of Chairman Tuerk and all members of the Review Committee, the committee has now produced its final report after two years of work. The report has given a comprehensive overview of the implementation of the international seabed regime over the past 20-plus years, made an objective evaluation of the work of the Authority, and put forward 19 recommendations for improvement. The Chinese delegation highly appreciates the diligent work carried out in this regard by the Review Committee and the Secretariat under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

In the view of my delegation, the report has given an objective and factual evaluation of the work of the Authority and made constructive recommendations. As such, it serves as importance guidance to the effort to improve the implementation of the international seabed regime and advance the work of the Authority going forward. In this connection, my delegation would like to make the following four comments on the future work of the Authority.

First, the Authority needs to strengthen its strategic planning. Currently, the international seabed undertaking is at a critical phase of parallel development of exploration and preparation for exploitation. An objective and science-based judgement on the situation and tasks facing the exploitation of international seabed resources is essential for guiding the activities carried out by the various parties in the Area. We believe that recommendation 17 contained in the report requesting the Secretary-General to submit a strategic plan to the Assembly is highly important. My delegation suggests that the Authority conduct as soon as possible an in-depth study of the policies, technologies, economics and environmental protection measures required in the commercial exploitation of the international seabed resources, as well as the future development trend of such exploitation. It can use as reference the practice of the 1994 report of the group of technical experts of the preparatory commission for the ISA, and put forward science-based projections on the timing of commercial exploitation, so as to provide a basis for the Authority, the sponsoring states and the contractors in their decision making on exploitation activities in the Area. China is willing to make its contribution in this regard. At the same time, the Authority needs to further strengthen the overall planning of the activities in the Area and formulate

practical strategic plans on the understanding, protection, utilization and governance of the international seabed area.

Secondly, the Authority needs to strengthen participation in the formulation of rules and regulations. Universal participation is the prerequisite for the realization of the principle of “common heritage of mankind” and is essential to the acceptability and effectiveness of relevant rules and regulations. The Authority must give play to the central role of states parties in the formulation and development of rules and regulations. In all stages of the formulation process, from preparation to research, drafting, revision and finally completion, the participation of states parties, the developing countries in particular, must be effectively enhanced. In addition, it is also necessary to hear the views of all other stakeholders.

Thirdly, the institutional reform of the Authority should be guided by the principle of gradual progress. With the approaching of commercial exploitation of seabed resources, the workload of the Authority is becoming increasingly heavy, posing great challenges to the work of the Assembly, the Council, the LTC and the Finance Committee. Moreover, the establishment of new organs will appear on the agenda before long. The Chinese delegation supports the Authority in working strictly under its mandate given by the Convention and the principles of gradual progress and cost-effectiveness to steadily advance the relevant institutional building. The implementation of the recommendations of the Periodic Review should lay emphasis on better implementing the system and institutional arrangements within the framework of the Convention rather than change the

existing legal and institutional arrangements. Efforts are also needed to avoid adding unnecessary financial burden for states parties and contractors.

Fourthly, the Authority needs to strengthen communication and coordination with other relevant international organizations. Enhanced international cooperation is an important guarantee for the effective implementation of the principle of common heritage of mankind. My delegation suggests that the Authority try to obtain the understanding and support of more international organizations regarding the regime and practice concerning the Area, and strengthen coordination with relevant international organizations to ensure that the rights of sponsoring states and contractors under the Convention, the Implementing Agreement and exploration and exploitation contracts be effectively safeguarded.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(Dear colleagues, the Chinese delegation will upload the English texts of its statements during this session under major items to the website of the Authority. Thank you for your attention.)