

**INTERVENTION BY SINGAPORE ON THE FINAL REPORT OF THE ARTICLE 154 REVIEW COMMITTEE (ASSEMBLY AGENDA ITEM 9 – WEDNESDAY, 16 AUGUST 2017)**

Thank you Mr President,

1 Singapore would like to commend the Article 154 Review Committee, Seascope, and the Secretariat for its good work in undertaking a general and systematic review of the manner in which the international regime of the Area has operated in practice. We also wish to congratulate Ambassador Helmut Tuerk for his leadership in ensuring that the Review Committee completed its work in a timely manner. The Article 154 Review has come at an opportune time to take stock of the Authority's performance to date, re-examine its internal processes, and consider possible areas of improvement that can bring about benefits to the work of the Authority and its organs. This is especially important as the Authority is transitioning from the exploration to exploitation phase. The Review has allowed us to look at ways to help the Authority achieve its objectives in an effective and efficient manner.

2 We are pleased to note that following the Assembly's deliberations on the interim report last year, the interim report was revised, taking into account the observations and comments made in the Assembly, as well as the additional comments received. The Review Committee has also significantly reduced the number of recommendations contained in the report from 50 to 19, and further refined them such that they are in line with the limits set in the Convention and related instruments, as well as practices developed by the Authority over the past 20 years. We appreciate that the final report was submitted well in advance of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session, which has allowed members of the Assembly and the Authority to have ample time to consider its recommendations.

Mr President,

3 My delegation is of the view that the final report contains useful recommendations. Notably, there are recommendations which would not be resource-intensive to implement, and would provide benefits exceeding the relative costs of their administration. An example would be Recommendation 9, which suggests that the Secretary-General produce a report for each session of the Council recalling the decisions that were adopted at the previous session

and reporting on the implementation of those decisions. This would be a low-cost practice that could provide an easily-accessible record of decisions and related follow-ups, and enhance the transparency and efficiency of the Council. We are glad to note that the Secretary-General's first report was broadly welcomed by the Council, receiving positive feedback.

4 My delegation also notes that there are several recommendations which relate to improving the ability of the Authority to deliberate on environmental issues. We appreciate that the Review Committee, in line with the mandate of the Authority, has maintained focus on the need to manage the impact of deep seabed activities in the Area on the environment. In particular, we support Recommendation 14, which calls for the LTC to consider the establishment of a working group to deal with environmental issues. It is important for the LTC to have a special focus on matters relating to the environment, given its role in the development of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area. Singapore also supports the suggestion to improve the sharing of environmental data, which is touched upon by Recommendations 6 and 18, and is pleased to note that the Authority has taken steps to address this issue through the development of a new data management strategy. The data management system that is eventually implemented must be able to protect the integrity of any collected data. Obviously, such data relating to the deep seabed can only be collected at a high cost, and some data could be commercially sensitive. We encourage the Authority to continue to actively consult contractors and other relevant stakeholders to strike an appropriate balance between transparency and commercial sensitivity.

5 Next, we note that a number of recommendations contained in the final report call for an increase in the number of meetings of the organs of the Authority. We appreciate the Secretary-General's considered proposal in response to these recommendations. Singapore acknowledges that there is undoubtedly a substantial increase in the volume and complexity of the work of the Authority and its organs, especially with regard to the development of the regulatory framework for exploitation activities in the Area. As outlined in the Secretary-General's proposal, the current schedule of meetings does not seem to allow adequate time for the Council to assess the recommendations of the LTC or present its annual report to the Assembly. It also does not allow enough time for the Assembly to examine the work of the Finance Committee. Therefore, it would seem necessary to cater sufficient time for the organs of the Authority and its members to perform their required tasks set out under the

Convention and advance the Authority's agenda in a timely and informed manner.

6 In this regard, Singapore supports the Secretary-General's proposal for a revised schedule of meetings in 2018 and 2019, which we note can be accommodated within the existing budget for conference services. We also take note of the LTC's readiness to respond to the outcome of the Article 154 Review, and the Finance Committee's preference to retain flexibility in terms of the length and frequency of its meetings. In this regard, minor adjustments to the revised schedule might be necessary. Having said this, we do take note of the concerns of the African Group raised by Algeria last week and today on its implementation. Further, we look forward to more discussion on how the Dutch proposal would work. In addition, the Assembly should subsequently carefully assess the number of meetings to determine if the revised schedule of meetings needs to be further adjusted beyond 2019, taking into consideration factors such as the efficiency of the revised schedule, the workload of the Authority and participation. On top of the revised schedule of meetings, my delegation is of the view that the various organs of the Authority should continue to explore ways to be more efficient and disciplined in the conduct of their work in order to improve their productivity and utilise their resources optimally.

7 Finally, Singapore is of the view that a strategic plan for a five-year period will be useful in charting the course for the Authority's work. A succinct plan will provide strategic direction for the Authority, improve accountability and transparency, and facilitate the production of a programme of work for the Secretariat. We recognise that other international organisations, such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), adopt similar plans to structure their priorities, and encourage the Authority to take reference from these plans, as appropriate. We thank the Secretary-General for agreeing to submit a draft next year.

Mr President,

8 In conclusion, the final report of the Article 154 Review Committee has provided a good foundation for the Assembly to appraise the existing operations of the Authority and its organs, and take the necessary steps to improve their practices. These steps will put the Authority on a stronger footing to address both current and future challenges. Singapore shares the view that

the review should be conducted again after five years, as envisioned in Article 154 of UNCLOS.

9           Moving forward, it will be useful for the Secretariat to keep track of the implementation of the recommendations that have been outlined, which could be submitted to the Assembly through a report from the Secretary-General prior to the next review. This will serve as a useful starting point for the next review, and as a guide for the deliberations of Member States.

10           I thank you, Mr President.

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