

A large offshore vessel, possibly a supply ship or a small offshore platform, is shown at sea during sunset. The vessel is illuminated by its own lights, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue. A large, stylized number '1' is in the top left corner.

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THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY AT A GLANCE

Photo: TMC







The International Seabed Authority at a glance

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an autonomous international organization that was established in 1994 under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the subsequent Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS (1994 Agreement).

It is the organization through which States parties to UNCLOS organize and control activities in the “Area”, which is defined as the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdictions (Figure 1).

UNCLOS took the important step of setting aside the Area and its mineral resources as the common heritage of humankind on behalf of which ISA acts.

Accordingly, ISA has several important responsibilities, including to:

- take necessary measures to ensure effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities in the Area;¹
- distribute to States parties payments or in-kind contributions derived from exploitation of non-living resources of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles;²
- promote and encourage marine scientific research concerning the Area and its resources as well as co-ordinate and disseminate the results of research and analysis when available;³
- organize the transfer of technology and build the capacity of developing States and technologically-less-advanced States.

The Area and maritime zones under UNCLOS

The Area is defined as the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.⁴ The establishment of the exact geographic limits of the Area depends on the establishment by States of the outer limits of their national jurisdiction, including the delineation of the continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea.

Coastal States must provide charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points indicating the outer limits of

national jurisdiction and, in the case of those indicating the outer limit lines of the continental shelf, deposit a copy of such charts or lists with the ISA Secretary-General.⁵

Ten members of ISA have so far deposited such charts and lists with the Secretary-General, namely: Australia, Côte d'Ivoire, France (with respect to Guadeloupe, Guyana, the Kerguelen Islands, Martinique, New Caledonia, Saint-Paul et Amsterdam and La Réunion), Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, Niue, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tuvalu.

¹ UNCLOS, Art.145

² UNCLOS, Art. 82(4)

³ UNCLOS, Art.143(2)

⁴ UNCLOS, Art.1(1)

⁵ UNCLOS, Art. 84(2)

Figure 1. The Area and maritime zones under UNCLOS





Map sources: MarineRegions.org, GEBCO, NOAA

Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan 2019-2023

The Strategic Plan⁶ for the period 2019 to 2023 was adopted by the Assembly at its 24th session in July 2018. The plan includes nine strategic directions that aim at guiding the work of ISA in the context of global challenges and towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs (Figure 2).

The corresponding High-Level Action Plan⁷ was adopted

by the Assembly in July 2019. It provides an overview of the key priorities and high-level actions needed to achieve the strategic objectives of the organization.

In December 2020, to deliver against specific strategic directions identified in the Strategic Plan, the Assembly adopted the Action Plan⁸ of ISA in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and took a decision⁹ to shift to a programmatic approach to capacity development.

An update on the implementation of the different plans is presented in Chapter 3.

Figure 2. The nine strategic directions identified by the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and relevant associated SDGs



⁶ ISBA/24/A/10

⁷ ISBA/25/A/15

⁸ ISBA/26/A/4

⁹ ISBA/26/A/18



Membership

All parties to UNCLOS are automatically Members of ISA. As of June 2022, there are 168 parties to UNCLOS (167 States and the European Union) and thus 168 Members of ISA.¹⁰ There have been no new ratifications or accessions to UNCLOS since the last Annual Report of the Secretary-General in December 2021.

In June 2021, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a party to the 1994 Agreement, bringing to 151 the number of parties to the Agreement (150 States and the European Union).

Part XI of UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement are to be interpreted and applied together as a single instrument. In the event of any inconsistency between the two, the provisions of the 1994 Agreement shall prevail.¹¹ 17 members of ISA became parties to UNCLOS before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement and have yet to become parties to the Agreement (Figure 3). Members of ISA that are not parties to the 1994 Agreement can participate in the work of ISA.

However, becoming a party to the 1994 Agreement would remove any potential conflict and Members are strongly encouraged to become parties at the earliest opportunity.

Permanent missions

As of June 2022, 31 States and the European Union maintain permanent missions to ISA (Figure 3). Of the 18 new permanent representatives accredited in 2021 and 2022, four countries accredited a representative for the first time (Cyprus, Malta, Namibia and Mauritius).

Protocol on Privileges and Immunities

The Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of ISA was adopted by the Assembly on 27 March 1998 and entered into force on 31 March 2003. As of June 2022, 47 Members are parties to the Protocol while a further 11 Members have signed but not yet ratified it (Figure 3).

A manual of protocol offering general guidance on the norms and practices of protocol and administrative requirements accepted and observed at the Headquarters of ISA was released by the ISA Secretariat in June 2022.¹²

¹⁰ UNCLOS, Art.156(2)

¹¹ 1994 Agreement, Art.2(1)

¹² https://isa.org.jm/files/documents/ISA_Manual_of_Protocol_June_2022_0.pdf

Observers

ISA collaborates with key stakeholders from governments, the private sector, international and regional organizations, research institutions and academia.

As of June 2022, ISA has granted observer status to 94 entities, including 30 States that are not party to UNCLOS. In addition, 32 United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental organizations as well as 32 non-governmental organizations also have observer status, enabling them to participate in meetings of the Council and the Assembly ([Table 1](#)).

In December 2021, during its 26th session, the Assembly approved two requests for observer status submitted by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and OceanCare.

Bodies that may participate as observers in the Assembly are described in rule 82, paragraph 1 of the Rules of procedure of the Assembly. Additional information can also be found in the guidelines for observer status of non-governmental organizations with ISA adopted by the Assembly in 2019 (ISBA/25/A/16).

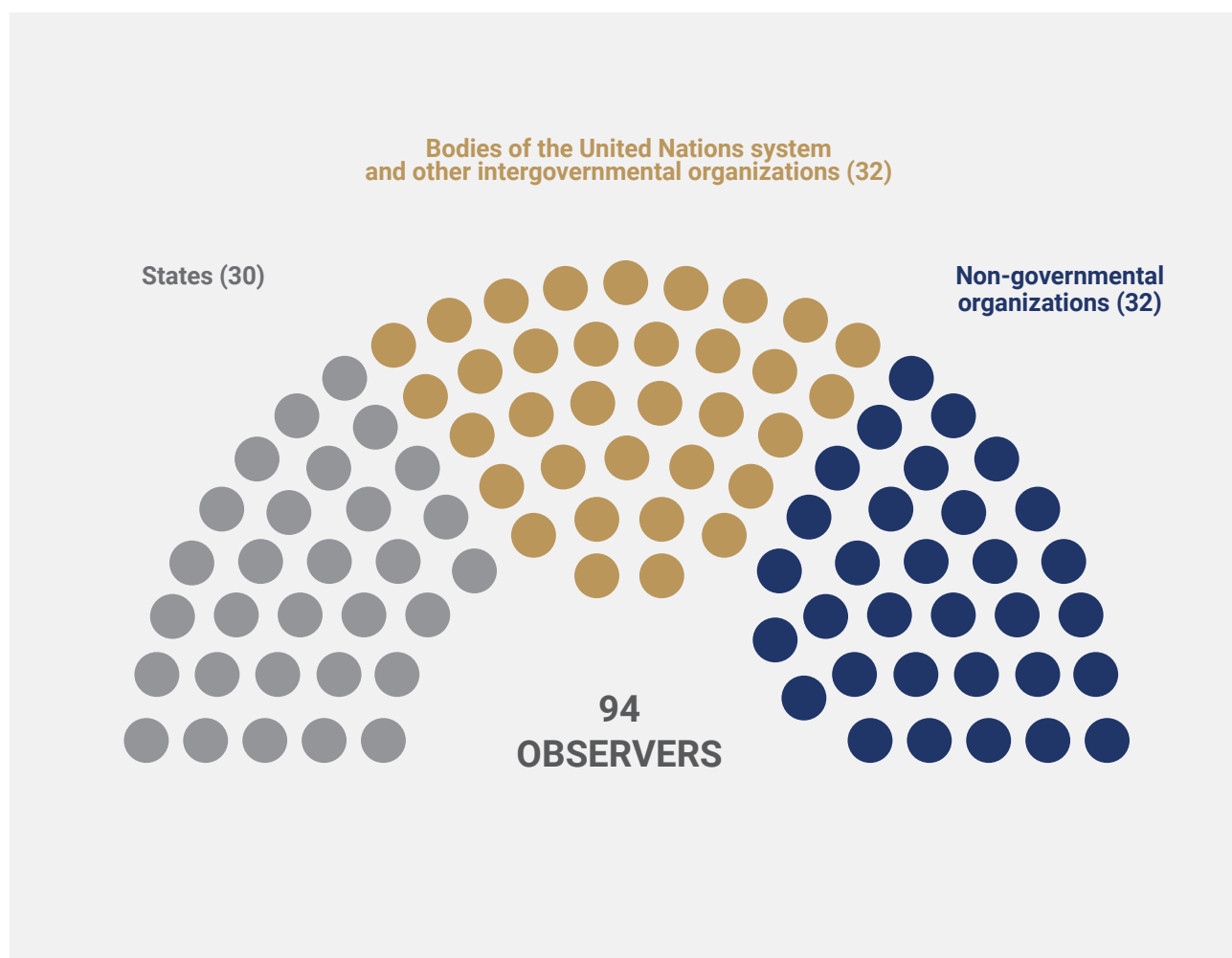
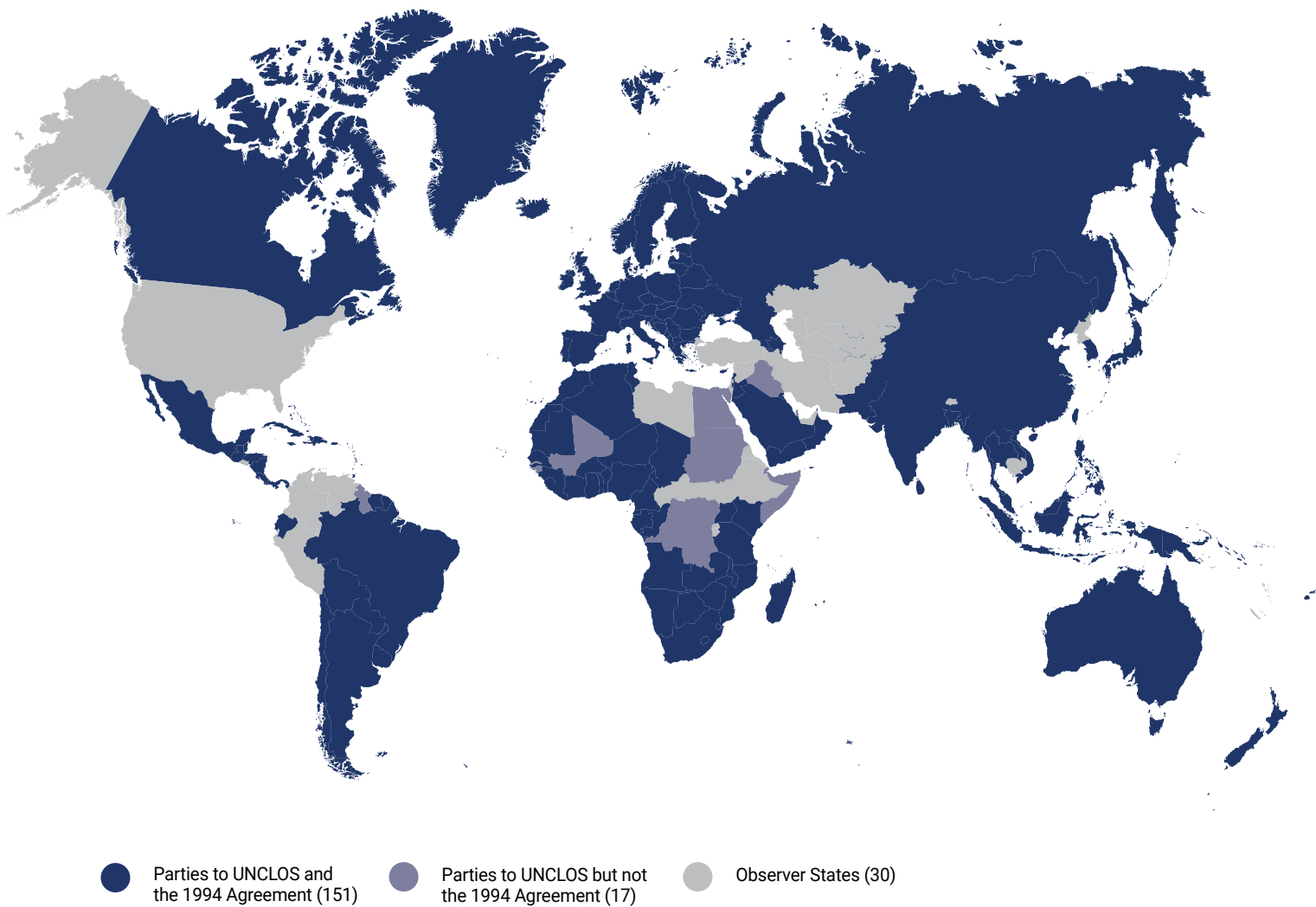
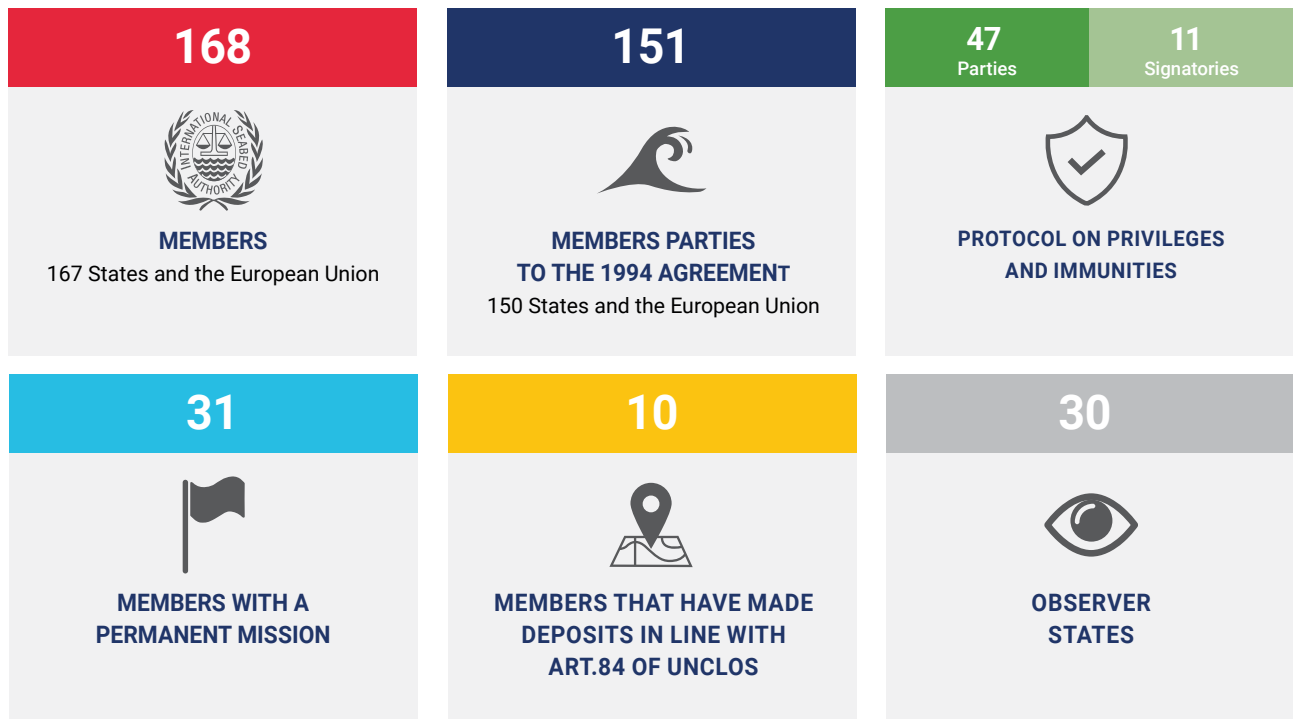


Table 1. List of ISA observers as at June 2022










States (30) 	Bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organization (32) 	Non-governmental organizations (32) 
Afghanistan	United Nations	Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea
Andorra	United Nations Environment Programme	African Minerals Development Centre
Bhutan	United Nations Development Programme	Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia School of Law
Burundi	International Labour Organization	Center for Polar and Deep Ocean Development, Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Cambodia	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Committee for Mineral Reserves International Reporting Standards
Central African Republic	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Conservation International
Colombia	World Health Organization	Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	World Bank	Deep Sea Conservation Coalition
El Salvador	International Monetary Fund	Durham University's Centre for Borders Research
Eritrea	International Civil Aviation Organization	Earthworks
Ethiopia	Universal Postal Union	Fish Reef Project
Holy See	International Telecommunication Union	Greenpeace International
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	World Meteorological Organization	Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies
Israel	International Maritime Organization	International Association of Drilling Contractors
Kazakhstan	World Intellectual Property Organization	International Cable Protection Committee
Kyrgyzstan	International Fund for Agricultural Development	International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions
Libya	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	International Marine Minerals Society
Liechtenstein	International Atomic Energy Agency	International Ocean Institute
Peru	Commonwealth	International Policy Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Rwanda	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission	InterRidge
San Marino	Inter-American Development Bank	Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology
South Sudan	International Hydrographic Organization	Law of the Sea Institute
Syrian Arab Republic	International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund	Mining Standards International
Tajikistan	Interoceanmetal Joint Organization	OceanCare
Turkey	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources	Ocean Society of India
Turkmenistan	OSPAR Commission	RESOLVE
United Arab Emirates	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries	Sargasso Sea Commission
United States of America	Permanent Commission for the South Pacific	Sasakawa Peace Foundation
Uzbekistan	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Venezuela	The Pacific Community	Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary
	World Trade Organization	World Ocean Council
	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme	World Wildlife Fund International

Figure 3. Overview of ISA membership



Member States

ISA Members parties to the 1994 Agreement, Members that are parties or signatories to the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of ISA, Members that have deposited their charts under Art.84 and Members with permanent missions at ISA.

	  		  		  
Albania	● ●	Greece	● ●	Palau	●
Algeria	● ●	Grenada	●	Panama	● ● ●
Angola	●	Guatemala	●	Papua New Guinea	●
Antigua and Barbuda	● ● ●	Guinea	● ●	Paraguay	●
Argentina	● ● ●	Guinea-Bissau	●	Philippines	● ● ●
Armenia	●	Guyana	●	Poland	● ●
Australia	● ● ● ●	Haiti	●	Portugal	● ●
Austria	●	Honduras	●	Qatar	●
Azerbaijan	●	Hungary	●	Republic of Korea	● ●
Bahamas	● ●	Iceland	●	Republic of Moldova	●
Bahrain	●	India	● ●	Romania	● ●
Bangladesh	● ●	Indonesia	● ●	Russian Federation	● ● ●
Barbados	●	Iraq	●	Saint Kitts and Nevis	●
Belarus	●	Ireland	● ● ● ●	Saint Lucia	●
Belgium	● ● ●	Italy	● ● ● ●	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	●
Belize	●	Jamaica	● ● ● ●	Samoa	●
Benin	●	Japan	● ● ● ●	Sao Tome and Principe	●
Bolivia	●	Jordan	● ●	Saudi Arabia	● ●
(Plurinational State of)		Kenya	● ●	Senegal	● ●
Bosnia and Herzegovina	●	Kiribati	●	Serbia	●
Botswana	●	Kuwait	●	Seychelles	●
Brazil	● ● ● ●	Lao PDR	●	Sierra Leone	●
Brunei Darussalam	●	Latvia	●	Singapore	●
Bulgaria	● ●	Lebanon	●	Slovakia	● ●
Burkina Faso	● ●	Lesotho	●	Slovenia	● ●
Cabo Verde	●	Liberia	●	Solomon Islands	●
Cameroon	● ● ● ●	Lithuania	● ●	Somalia	●
Canada	●	Luxembourg	●	South Africa	● ● ●
Chad	●	Madagascar	●	Spain	● ● ● ●
Chile	● ● ● ●	Malawi	●	Sri Lanka	●
China	● ● ● ●	Malaysia	●	Sudan	● ●
Comoros	●	Maldives	●	Suriname	●
Congo	●	Mali	●	Sweden	●
Cook Islands	●	Malta	● ● ● ●	Switzerland	●
Costa Rica	● ● ●	Marshall Islands	●	State of Palestine	●
Côte d'Ivoire	● ● ● ●	Mauritania	●	Thailand	●
Croatia	● ● ●	Mauritius	● ● ● ● ●	Timor-Leste	●
Cuba	● ● ● ●	Mexico	● ● ● ● ●	Togo	● ●
Cyprus	● ● ●	Micronesia	●	Tonga	●
Czech Republic	● ●	Monaco	●	Trinidad and Tobago	● ● ● ●
DR Congo	●	Mongolia	●	Tunisia	●
Denmark	● ●	Montenegro	●	Tuvalu	● ● ●
Djibouti	●	Morocco	●	Uganda	●
Dominica	●	Mozambique	● ●	Ukraine	●
Dominican Republic	● ● ●	Myanmar	●	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	● ●
Ecuador	●	Namibia	● ● ● ●	Tanzania	●
Egypt	●	Nauru	● ● ●	Uruguay	● ● ●
Equatorial Guinea	●	Nepal	●	Vanuatu	●
Estonia	● ●	Netherlands	● ●	Viet Nam	●
Eswatini	●	New Zealand	●	Yemen	●
Fiji	●	Nicaragua	●	Zambia	●
Finland	●	Niger	●	Zimbabwe	●
France *	● ● ● ● ●	Nigeria	● ● ● ●		
Gabon	● ● ●	Niue	● ● ●		
Gambia	● ● ●	North Macedonia	● ●		
Georgia	● ● ●	Norway	● ●		
Germany	● ● ● ●	Oman	● ●		
Ghana	● ● ●	Pakistan	● ● ● ●		

* France: with respect to Guadeloupe, Guyana, the Kerguelen Islands, Martinique, New Caledonia, Saint-Paul et Amsterdam and La Réunion