



**Statement by Reverend Fr. Luciano Labanca, Head of Delegation of the Holy See to the Twenty-seventh Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority, on agenda item 9, “Annual report of the Secretary-General” (ISBA/27/A/2, ISBA/27/A/2/Add.1), 2 August 2022**

Mister President,

The Delegation of the Holy See expresses appreciation and heartfelt congratulations on the conduct of this Assembly and the smooth flow of its work, due to the competent leadership of the Acting President and the newly appointed Bureau. This Delegation also wishes to join the congratulations expressed by several other Delegations to Jamaica, the host State of the work of this Assembly, which is celebrating the 60th Anniversary of its Independence, as well as appreciation for the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Referring to the Report of the Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority, according to Article 166 (4) of the UNCLOS, with reference to the status of the completion of the high-level actions assigned to the Secretariat (ISBA/27/A/2/Add.1), the Delegation of the Holy See notes that strategic direction n. 3 “*protect the marine environment*” is 61.5% complete and no. 5 “*build capacity for developing States*”, is 45% complete.

The interest of the Holy See is strongly focused on these two strategic directions, which it firmly supports and promotes. With reference to the protection of the marine environment, it seems appropriate to quote some words from the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis: “*Greater investment needs to be made in research aimed at understanding more fully the functioning of ecosystems and adequately analyzing the different variables associated with any significant modification of the environment. Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another*” (Laudato Si’, no. 42).

The Holy See promotes an integral approach to ecology, in which attention to the environment – the common heritage of mankind – is combined with the centrality of the human person. The words of Pope Francis are pertinent here as well: “*Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we [...] consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions*” (Laudato Si’, no. 137). For this reason, the Delegation of the Holy See strongly promotes and supports the implementation of strategic direction no. 5. It cannot be accepted that some members of the international community, especially the weakest and poorest, are left behind. In conclusion, the words of Pope Francis are a source of inspiration: “*The mindset which leaves no room for sincere concern for the environment is the same mindset which lacks concern for the inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society. For ‘the current model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life’*” (Laudato Si’, no. 196).

Thank you, Mr. President.