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Agenda item 14

**Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission
on the work of the Commission at its twenty-eighth session**

Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the second part of its twenty-eighth session

Addendum

I. Introduction

1. The second part of the twenty-eighth session of the Legal and Technical Commission of the International Seabed Authority was held from 28 June to 7 July 2023. A total of 33 members participated in the meetings. Adolfo Maestro Gonzalez, Malcolm Clark and Mark Alcock contributed to the consideration of agenda items by email. Following previous practice, Becky Hitchin participated in the meetings in her capacity as a candidate nominated by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for election to fill a vacancy on the Commission.

2. On 6 July, pursuant to rule 19 (2) of its rules of procedure,¹ the Commission nominated Michelle Walker to represent it at the forthcoming meetings of the Council and, at the invitation of the Council, to respond to questions when a matter of particular relevance or complexity relating to the work of the Commission was under consideration.

II. Activities of the contractors

A. Implementation of training programmes under plans of work for exploration and allocation of training opportunities

3. On 28 June, the Commission heard a briefing on the status of the contractor training programmes. Since March 2023, 2 training placements for the benefit of

¹ [ISBA/6/C/9](#), annex.



candidates from developing States had been successfully implemented; 25 were in progress and 23 were pending.²

4. The Commission noted the importance of capacity development and training programmes in building the sustainable expertise of member States. It discussed the overarching significance of the training programme as one of the capacity development programmes, activities and initiatives implemented by the Authority as part of the capacity development strategy adopted by the Assembly in 2022,³ as well as its value with regard to the creation of a pool of experts from developing States. The Commission also noted efforts by the secretariat to establish an alumni network of former trainees of the contractor training programme and requested that updates on the initiative be provided at the twenty-ninth session.

5. The Commission continues to focus on the application of skills and the prospects available to trainees after training programmes to ensure overall professional development. It discussed strategies to increase the participation of women in deep-sea research, specifically to strengthen efforts undertaken by the Authority and contractors to advance the empowerment and leadership of women in marine scientific research.

6. The Commission noted with appreciation that since March 2023 an increasing number of contractors⁴ had pledged to allocate 50 per cent of their training placements to qualified women and urged contractors that had not done so to join the pledge. The Commission discussed the contractor training programme selection process and factors such as gender and geographical balance in the evaluation of candidates, as well as the need to break barriers by balancing the consideration of factors such as age and career level with a view to creating opportunities for young women in scientific careers.

7. On the basis of the recommendations of the training subgroup, the Commission selected 17 candidates intersessionally for the training programmes provided under contracts for exploration with the following five contractors: Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation, Interoceanmetal Joint Organization and the Republic of Korea.

8. On 5 July, on the basis of the recommendations of the training subgroup, the Commission selected 15 candidates for the remaining programmes offered by the following four contractors: Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd., Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany, Tonga Offshore Mining Limited and Nauru Ocean Resources Incorporated.

9. On 6 July, the Commission participated in the fourth end-of-training certificate presentation ceremony to recognize 29 trainees who had successfully completed contractor training programmes between July and December 2022. The awardees – 7 women and 22 men – were from 14 developing States.⁵ The Commission commends the

² [ISBA/28/LTC/4](#) and [ISBA/28/LTC/6](#).

³ [ISBA/27/A/11](#).

⁴ Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany, Blue Minerals Jamaica Limited, Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais S.A. (a former International Seabed Authority contractor), Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd., Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd., Nauru Ocean Resources Incorporated, Tonga Offshore Mining Limited and UK Seabed Resources Ltd.

⁵ Including one small island developing State, eight least developed countries, one landlocked developing country and one country that is both a small island developing State and a least developed country.

contractors for their continued efforts to deliver training for the benefit of candidates from developing States.

B. Annual reports of contractors

10. During the second part of its twenty-eighth session, the Commission considered 30 annual reports on activities carried out by contractors in 2022, submitted pursuant to section 10 of the standard clauses for exploration contracts. The Commission expressed appreciation to the secretariat for its support in the evaluation of the annual reports.

11. Following previous practice, the Commission set up three working groups to review the legal, financial and training aspects, the geological and technological aspects and the environmental aspects of the annual reports. It dedicated five of the eight days of meetings (on 30 June and from 3 to 6 July) to the consideration of the annual reports within the working groups.

12. In addition to specific comments on each report to be conveyed to the individual contractors by the Secretary-General, the Commission provided general comments, as set out below.

Legal, financial and training aspects

13. The Commission acknowledged that the contractors had, in general, provided responses to the questions that it had raised during the previous year. It also noted that they had complied with the relevant templates for reporting and had largely met the deadline for the submission of annual reports. The Commission reminded contractors that had missed the deadline to ensure the timely submission of annual reports in the future, in accordance with the regulations.

14. While most contractors had complied with their plans of work, the Commission noted with concern that some still failed to carry out their agreed exploration activities and requested them to provide details to the Commission explaining the lack of progress. The Commission commended contractors for international cooperation initiatives and collaboration efforts. It noted, however, that such initiatives should not serve as a substitute for the obligation for contractors to carry out exploration activities in accordance with the terms of their contracts.

15. The Commission expressed concern that some contractors had indicated in their annual reports that the absence of a regulatory framework for exploitation had created legal uncertainty and served as an obstacle to proceeding with certain aspects of their plans of work, as a result of which they intended to limit efforts and focus mainly on desk-based study work. In the light of this, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to communicate such concerns to the relevant contractors and request them to specify the legal grounds for declining to implement certain aspects of their plans of work and the reasons for the suggested modifications in the absence of proper consultation with the Authority. While the Commission will continue to monitor the work of those contractors, with the expectation that their work will be carried out in accordance with their respective commitments, the Commission wishes to bring this concern to the attention of the Council.

16. The Commission noted that, although training activities had been disrupted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, several contractors, after consultations with the secretariat, had amended their training plans and made significant progress in providing training opportunities. The Commission noted that, of the 98 training placements in 2022, 28 (29 per cent) had been allocated to women, with a projected selection rate of 65 per cent by the end of 2023. The Commission

noted with appreciation that two more contractors had joined the pledge to allocate 50 per cent of their training opportunities to qualified women, under the Women in Deep-Sea Research project, and urged contractors that had not done so to join the pledge to increase the number of qualified women applicants. Contractors that had deferred opportunities until 2024 were encouraged to make the effort to deliver those opportunities.

17. The Commission noted with regret that one contractor had not provided any training opportunities during its entire contract period. Noting the difficulties that the contractor had experienced, the Commission requested it nonetheless to fulfil its obligations in accordance with its plan of work and to provide information to the secretariat on its plans in that regard as soon as possible.

18. The Commission noted that expenditure levels for some contractors had been far lower than estimated and reminded those that had not yet done so to provide explanations of the variance. A review indicated that contractors' actual expenditures were less than planned in the calendar year 2022 and that they had cumulatively spent less on their programme of activities in the current five-year period. Of the 14 contractors (47 per cent) that had spent less than planned in 2022 and cumulatively less in their current five-year period, 9 had underspent by more than 30 per cent in 2022. The Commission also noted that, although expenditure remained lower than predicted for some contractors, encouraging improvements had been made compared with previous years. Conversely, on a positive note, some contractors had incurred far greater expenditure than expected.

Geological and technological aspects

19. The Commission acknowledged that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on exploration activity had decreased, as reflected in the number of cruises conducted. It noted that contractors had carried out 23 exploration campaigns in 2022, equal to the number of cruises conducted in 2021. The total number of cruises in the past five years (from 2018 to 2022) was 103, ranging from a low of 14 in 2020 due to the pandemic to 23 in 2021 and 2022. The Commission was satisfied with the trend towards returning to the levels of exploration activity before the pandemic.

20. The Commission noted that some contractors had not complied with all of the requirements in document [ISBA/21/LTC/15](#) and [ISBA/21/LTC/15/Corr.1](#), notably those in section III on the result of exploration work, such as ship track and bathymetry requirements. In addition, it noted that, for most contractors, the delivery of digital data should be improved using the DeepData database templates.

21. With regard to polymetallic nodule exploration activities, the Commission noted that there was a large difference among contractors in the degree of progress in developing mining and processing technology. It noted that some contractors had succeeded in testing components at sea, while others were still conducting conceptual designs of mining systems. Some contractors had not provided information regarding mining technology. The Commission requested that contractors consider cooperating or collaborating with other contractors in the development of mining systems and processing technology.

22. The Commission noted that some contractors' reports on the results of analyses and studies of samples collected in previous years did not indicate specific sources of data regarding the year of the cruise, and requested that those contractors provide information in accordance with the requirements set out in document [ISBA/21/LTC/15](#) and [ISBA/21/LTC/15/Corr.1](#). It further noted that the answers from contractors to the questions on geological and technical aspects raised in previous reports had been satisfactory.

23. The Commission requested that contractors whose contracts were coming to an end provide information on their strategies to prepare for the exploitation stage, as specified in Council decision [ISBA/21/C/19](#) and in paragraph 9, section 1, of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982.

24. The Commission encouraged contractors to contribute bathymetric data to the Authority's Area 2030 initiative, the purpose of which is to compile all available bathymetric data from contractors for the various ocean areas with the aim of facilitating the complete mapping of the global ocean floor by 2030.

Environmental aspects

25. The Commission noted that in 2022, owing partly to the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, some contractors had focused on desk-based studies such as laboratory analyses. It noted that the environmental impact assessment and ongoing impact monitoring of the pilot mining tests by contractors were very encouraging, and it would be useful to understand the impact of mining tests on the deep-sea environment and for the establishment of regulatory regimes.

26. The Commission also noted that many of its comments on the annual reports for 2022 were similar to those made in reviews of previous annual reports and that some contractors had not complied with the requests contained in those comments. It noted that comments had repeatedly been made regarding the scope and format of the annual reports, the analyses requested and the results of the analyses. Relevant issues in that regard include the following:

(a) In one case in which a contractor holds licences for two exploration contract areas but conducts exploration work and baseline studies for only one of the contracts, the two annual reports overlapped considerably. Activities in each contract area should be kept separate, and not reported against another area;

(b) Some contractors limited their exploration work and environmental baseline studies to a limited part of their exploration contract area. Under the contract, exploration work and baseline studies need to be conducted across the exploration contract area;

(c) Some contractors reported on the workplan for scientific projects operating within or near their contract areas. Such work should be presented in appendices rather than in the body of the report, where it might appear that the contractor had been involved directly;

(d) Some contractors had not used the revised templates (see [ISBA/21/LTC/15/Corr.1](#)) for the submission of raw digital data to the secretariat.

27. The Commission recommends the following:

(a) Contractors should collaborate to share image libraries of species, as was done for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, for improved consistency in species identification and more wide-ranging regional data;

(b) In instances in which contractors use standards developed outside those of the Authority, they are encouraged to collaborate in preparing a comparison table on the requirements of the standards used for their environmental studies and the recommendations provided in document [ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.2](#);

(c) The programme of activities for the following year should contain enough detail for the Commission to evaluate performance during its assessment of the report for the following year;

(d) The Commission appreciates that one contractor had included voluntary consideration of areas of high biodiversity or endemic fauna in its relinquishment processes. If other contractors are considering following this approach, the Commission encourages them to include such information in their annual reports.

28. The Commission considered the request by the Council to name contractors that had either responded inadequately or failed to respond to calls from the Council to address issues of concern in the implementation of their plans of work. In that regard, and to adequately address matters in the consideration of annual reports, the Commission identified a number of general trends that required further consideration with regard to the performance of contractors, as reflected in the previous paragraphs.

29. The Commission, having taken into consideration the legal aspects associated with the naming of contractors, agreed to continue its consideration of the issue, including by identifying criteria for naming contractors within the intersessional period, once contractors respond to the comments and questions formulated in the review of the annual reports for the current year, with the aim of addressing the Council's request. The Commission decided that it would consider the matter during the first part of the twenty-ninth session, with the aim of naming contractors that either do not respond or respond inadequately during the next reporting cycle.

30. In addition, the Commission considered a note prepared by the secretariat to facilitate dialogue between the Commission and contractors on matters pertaining to the implementation of their plans of work, which could significantly contribute to improved performance by contractors and the provision of better and more timely information to the Council. Such dialogue could take place following the preliminary review of the annual reports or, as the case may be, periodic reviews by the secretariat and on a case-by-case approach.

31. In addition, the Commission received a request from a contractor to consider creating an avenue for regular engagement with contractors, to ensure that they can advance their projects in alignment with the Commission's expectations. With that in mind, the Commission would hold such a dialogue within the context of the consideration of annual reports, on a case-by-case basis, as an opportunity to follow up on the progress of specific contractors in the implementation of their exploration activities, as well as on the concerns identified in the review of the annual reports of some contractors.

C. Relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts

32. On 28 June, the Commission took note of the notification of relinquishment of one third of the area allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation under its contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts.

33. On the same day, it reviewed a request from the Government of India and agreed to recommend that the Council approve the deferral of relinquishment of parts of the area under its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides. Information submitted as justification for the request is available in document [ISBA/28/LTC/7](#).

34. On 29 June, the Commission noted that the date requested by India for deferral of its relinquishment would mean that it would then be obliged to perform its first and second relinquishment at the same time.

III. Regulatory activities of the Authority

A. Development of standards and guidelines (environmental threshold values)

35. On 28, 29 and 30 June, the Commission considered the development of standards and guidelines, taking note of comments conveyed to it by the Council during the first part of the twenty-eighth session. The Commission considered the comments and revised the proposed terms of reference with respect to the proposed terms of reference for an intersessional expert group to support the development of environmental threshold values.

36. The Commission decided to keep a maximum of 10 experts for each subgroup of the intersessional expert group. The decision was made in particular following the Council's request in its decision [ISBA/27/C/42](#) to complete the development of environmental thresholds within phase 1 of the ongoing development of standards and guidelines, thus providing a short time frame for the expert group to complete its work.

37. The Commission noted that a small group of experts would work more efficiently, taking into account that the intersessional expert group would be expected to work entirely online for cost-efficiency and timeliness, as also requested by the Council in its decision [ISBA/27/C/42](#). The online format, however, makes it difficult for large groups to participate adequately, in particular given that the geographical representation required in the groups would cover different time zones. It was highlighted that the limit of 10 participants for each subgroup is not exclusive of input from other stakeholders, as the selected experts can draw on their professional networks, allowing external information to be incorporated into the early stages of the development of the thresholds. A stakeholder consultation process will be launched on the draft reports of the intersessional expert group.

38. The Council decided in its decision [ISBA/27/C/42](#) that, as an initial step, the intersessional expert group should work on three specific topics: toxicity; turbidity and settling of resuspended sediments; and underwater noise and light pollution. Where additional environmental pressures potentially caused by deep-sea mining are identified, they may be addressed at a later stage.

39. The Commission agreed that the proposed timeline was indicative of and subject to the development of the subgroups' workplans. It considered that it would be appropriate to open a call for the submission of relevant data and information to support the work of the intersessional expert group, after an initial scoping by each of its subgroups.

40. The subgroups will have two Co-Chairs and one alternate Co-Chair, in addition to the 10 experts. Commission members will not be counted among the experts in each subgroup, and the composition of experts will be based primarily on scientific and technical expertise and experience, taking into account geographical representation and gender balance. The following members were appointed as Co-Chairs and alternate Co-Chairs of the subgroups of the intersessional expert group:

- Toxicity: Dao Viet Ha and Carsten Rühlemann; alternate: Moreno Andrés Camaño;
- Turbidity and settling of resuspended sediment: Malcolm Clark and Tomohiko Fukushima; alternate: Se-Jong Ju;
- Underwater noise and light pollution: Mark Alcock and Théophile Ndougsa Mbarga; alternate: Becky Hitchin.

41. A call for the nomination of experts is expected to be opened by the secretariat from 14 July to 15 September 2023. Member States and other stakeholders are invited to submit the names of nominees for the subgroups.

B. Review of the recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area

42. On 29 June, the Commission took note of a report presented by the secretariat on a chronology of activities from 2021 to 2023 related to the conduct of the environmental impact statement evaluation by Nauru Ocean Resources Incorporated for a polymetallic nodule collector system component test campaign, as well as supervisory activities by the secretariat in relation to the investigation of the overflow event.

43. On 29 June and 3 and 4 July, the Commission considered the request by the Council in its decision [ISBA/27/C/44](#) for the Commission to revise [ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.2](#). In that decision, the Council noted that the current process for reviewing environmental impact statements in relation to the testing of mining components or other activities requiring an environmental impact assessment during exploration should be revised to ensure that recommendations of the Commission to the Secretary-General on the basis of paragraph 41 (e), including its underlying rationale, should be sent to the Council for informational purposes. The Council also requested that any recommendation, along with the final environmental impact assessment, should be published on the website of the Authority.

44. The Commission revised the recommendation in accordance with the request of the Council. The secretariat will reissue the revised recommendation as document [ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.3](#).⁶

IV. Environmental management planning

Development of a standardized approach for the development, approval and review of regional environmental management plans

45. The Commission discussed the revision of the draft guidance to facilitate the development of regional environmental management plans ([ISBA/27/C/37](#)), as requested by the Council in its decision [ISBA/26/C/10](#) and paragraph 13 of its decision [ISBA/27/C/44](#), in the light of written comments submitted by delegations. Following its preliminary consideration of the eight written submissions in March, the Commission considered the comments in different categories (legal and policy, process-related, and technical) and noted the need for further work on several key issues.

46. The Commission tasked its regional environmental management plan working group to undertake further revision of the draft guidance. The working group agreed on a schedule to meet during the intersessional period, in September and October

⁶ The revised text of paragraph 41 (e) will read: “The Commission will continue and finalize its review on the basis of annex I, paragraph 69 to the present recommendations and will provide a recommendation to the Secretary-General as to whether the environmental impact statement should be incorporated into the programme of activities under the contract. The Secretary-General will inform the contractor accordingly. Such a recommendation, including its underlying rationale, will be sent by the Secretary-General to the Council for informational purposes and will be published on the website of the Authority, along with the final environmental impact statement.”

2023, to discuss the necessary revisions. It was agreed that the intersessional work would facilitate the revisions needed to address the key issues identified in the written submissions and provide rationale and justifications related to its considerations, with a view to providing a revised version of the draft guidance for the consideration of the Commission at its next meeting.

47. The Commission took note of a preliminary summary of the outcomes of the workshop held from 1 to 5 May in Chennai, India, on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Area in the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the mid-ocean ridges and the Central Indian Ocean Basin, and the continued work on the finalization of the workshop report and the background information documents by the workshop Co-Chairs.

48. The Commission also took note of the forthcoming workshop planned to be held in Tokyo in February 2024 on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the North-West Pacific Ocean. The workshop will build on the results of the previous workshops held in Qingdao, China, in 2018 and the online workshop on regional environmental management plans in 2020.

V. Data management

Review of the data management strategy of the Authority for the period 2023–2028

49. On 5 July, the Commission welcomed the significant progress made by the secretariat in relation to data management at the Authority. The Commission endorsed the direction and priorities set out in the draft strategic road map for the period 2023–2028 to leverage data for the implementation of the Authority’s action plan for marine scientific research prepared by the secretariat, and agreed to provide continued support for its implementation and monitoring.

50. The Commission will conduct intersessional work and organize an online meeting on 14 November to discuss and provide input to develop a workplan for implementing the strategic road map. The Commission will consider the results of this work at its next meeting during the twenty-ninth session.

51. The Commission took note of the DeepData user manual for the secretariat data manager persona and the DeepData reporting template guidance for the submission of digital data prepared by the secretariat.

VI. Matters referred to the Commission by the Council

Use of the silence procedure in the adoption of decisions by the Commission and improvement of procedures for greater transparency

52. The Commission was provided with a report by the secretariat summarizing the procedure and methodology adopted by the Commission in the use of the silence procedure during the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh sessions.⁷ The Commission noted that the procedure had been used to consolidate working practices at a time when in-person meetings were not possible, by ensuring the flexibility necessary for members of the Commission to consult and make progress in discussions. As a result, the use of the silence procedure became a tool at the disposal of the Commission to

⁷ ISBA/28/LTC/5.

work beyond the schedule of in-person meetings and ensure efficiency as well as continuity in its work. Furthermore, the Commission noted that the use of the silence procedure was a confirmatory process as objections can be raised but, if none are raised, it supports consensus-building.

53. The Commission noted that several aspects of its work had to be continuous in nature and sometimes time-sensitive, considering that not all members of the Commission are able to attend the whole of every meeting. The use of the silence procedure could continue to serve as a useful tool in assisting the Commission to advance with its work during the intersessional period, taking into account that the silence procedure was not incompatible with the rules of procedure of the Commission. Thorough discussions within the Commission will always take place before placing any document under silence procedure, as the procedure is a means for decision-making at the end of, and not a substitute for, the consultation process in the Commission.

54. The Commission noted that it would continue to use the silence procedure in combination with its remote and in-person plenary meetings and would consider the flexibility of the time limit of 72 hours depending on the nature of, and technicality or otherwise of, the report that needed to be adopted, taking also into consideration the time of the year. The Commission agreed to use the procedure contained in annex I to document [ISBA/28/LTC/5](#) as its guide.

VII. Other matters

A. Implementation of the strategic plan of the Authority for 2019–2023

55. On 6 July, the Commission took note of the report on and the status of the implementation of the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2021–2023. It was recalled that the Assembly, in its decision [ISBA/25/A/15](#) and [ISBA/25/A/15/Corr.1](#) relating to the implementation of the strategic plan, had committed to strengthening the existing working practices of the Authority and had accordingly invited members of the Authority and observers, as well as the organs of the Authority, to support the implementation of the strategic plan and the high-level action plan.

56. The Commission noted that, owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the organs of the Authority, reporting for the period 2021–2022 could not be undertaken. Accordingly, the report presented to the Commission covered the period 2021–2023. The Commission noted that it had been assigned responsibility for 25 high-level actions and 30 associated outputs for the reporting period.

57. The Commission also noted that, as of May 2023, 16 (52 per cent) of the assigned high-level actions and outputs had been completed while 15 (48 per cent) were still in progress. All outputs assigned for the reporting period under strategic directions 1 (Realize the role of the Authority in a global context), 8 (Improve the organizational performance of the Authority) and 9 (Commit to transparency) had been completed.

58. The status of completion of the high-level actions and associated outputs assigned to the Commission for the reporting period 2021–2023 is provided in annex I to the present report. For further information and details compiled by the secretariat on the work undertaken for all outputs, see annex II.

B. Women in Deep-Sea Research project

59. On 6 July, the Commission heard a briefing on the online World Ocean Day celebration organized by the secretariat on 8 June. The Commission was informed that, during the celebration, the See Her Exceed mentoring programme⁸ initiated under the Women in Deep-Sea Research project⁹ had been launched. The Commission noted that eight senior experts had been engaged to take up mentorship roles and that applications for mentees were open until 31 August 2023.

60. The Commission commended the project and the importance of its key expected outcome, namely to empower and enhance the leadership of women scientists from developing States by increasing their role and participation in deep-sea research. The Commission welcomed the invitation to act as an ambassador of See Her Exceed, including by supporting the dissemination of information and identifying potential mentees and mentors in their respective networks. The mentoring programme would aim to increase the representation of women scientists from developing States, including the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in deep-sea research.

C. International Seabed Authority engagement in intergovernmental conferences

61. On 4 July, the Commission took note of an update to the activities of the secretariat on the topic of deep-sea plastic pollution, especially in the light of ongoing negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. The secretariat reported that it was currently finalizing a consultancy to assess the potential contribution of the Authority to promoting the investigation of plastic pollution in the deep seabed. The consultancy included a study on the occurrence and distribution of microplastics in the deep sea, which will provide input on marine plastics to the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. The Commission welcomed this work and took note of a potential project on developing an ocean health indicator for the deep seabed, which is being developed by the secretariat on the basis of the results of the work.

62. On 6 July, the Commission took note of the participation of the secretariat in the process of negotiation of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It noted that the Authority, by recommendation of its member States, had participated in the intergovernmental conference with the objective of representing the perspectives of the Authority and its mandate during the discussions, highlighting the relevance of the provisions of the international legally binding instrument for the Authority and identifying any potential overlap with its role and mandate and the possible contribution of the Authority to the successful implementation of the provisions.

⁸ See www.isa.org.jm/widsr-mentoring-programme.

⁹ See www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/widsr-project.

Annex I

Status of completion of high-level actions and related outputs assigned to the Legal and Technical Commission for the reporting period 2021–2023

<i>Strategic directions</i>	<i>Number of items relevant to the reporting period</i>	<i>Completed</i>		<i>In progress</i>	<i>On hold</i>	<i>Completion rate (percentage)</i>
		<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Achieved</i>			
Strategic direction 1: realize the role of the Authority in a global context	1	1	–	–	–	100
Strategic direction 2: strengthen the regulatory framework for activities in the Area	4	2	–	2	–	50
Strategic direction 3: protect the marine environment	14	4	3	7	–	71
Strategic direction 4: promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area	1	–	–	1	–	Not applicable
Strategic direction 5: build capacity for developing States	5	–	1	4	–	20
Strategic direction 6: ensure fully integrated participation by developing States	3	2	–	1	–	67
Strategic direction 7: ensure equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits	–	–	–	–	–	Not applicable
Strategic direction 8: improve the organizational performance of the Authority	1	1	–	–	–	100
Strategic direction 9: commit to transparency	2	2	–	–	–	100
Total	31	12	4	15	–	52

Annex II

Status of implementation by the Legal and Technical Commission of the relevant high-level actions and related outputs for the reporting period 2021–2023

The status of implementation by the Legal and Technical Commission of the relevant high-level actions and related outputs for the reporting period 2021–2023 is available (in English only) at the following link: [annex-II-LTC-Outputs-2021-2023-rev-19_05_23.pdf](#).
