

**Statement Delivered by Mrs, Khalilah Hackman (Ghana) on  
behalf of the African Group on the 2023 Annual Report of the  
Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority  
ISA Assembly,  
25<sup>th</sup> July, 2023**

***Mr. President,***

***Hon. Alando Terrelonge, Minister of State for Foreign  
Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica***

***Excellencies,***

***Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,***

1. The delegation of Ghana has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.
2. The African Group conveys its warm congratulations to you, Amb. Funday Turay and other members on your election to the Bureau of the 28<sup>th</sup> session. We are fully confident of your able leadership and look forward to making progress and reaching positive outcomes under your guidance.
3. Before proceeding to the report of the Secretary-General, it is only proper that we express our profound appreciation to the host State, Jamaica, for the warm welcome and courtesies extended to our various delegations. It is always a pleasure to return to the beautiful city of Kingston and rather pleasing to once again walk through the main entrance of the Conference

Centre. We look forward to the completion of the renovations to facilitate future meetings of the ISA.

***Mr. President,***

4. The African Group thanks the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Lodge, for his annual report contained in document No. ISB/28/A/2 and the illustrative hard copy version which together, provide a comprehensive overview the activities undertaken to further the mandate of the Authority as well as the objectives outlined in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.
5. On this day of African Seas and Oceans, the African Group takes this opportunity to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention as they continue to provide the legal and normative basis for all activities in the Area beyond national jurisdiction.
6. The recommitments echoed by Member States during the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration of the adoption of the Convention, points to the continuing relevance of the Convention in ensuring the effective and sustainable administration of the Area and its resources for the Common Heritage of Humankind, with due regard to the protection of the marine environment.

7. We welcome the Republic of Rwanda on becoming the newest party to the Convention and the 1994 Implementing Agreement and urge accelerated action on the part of those state parties that are yet to become party to the Agreement.
  
8. The African Group takes a positive note of the extensive work carried out under all 9 strategic directions to deliver on the high-level actions and related outputs assigned for 2022 -2023 period. The achievements recorded would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the Staff of the Secretariat to whom we are most appreciative.
  
9. As international efforts for the achievement of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continue in earnest, it is important to underscore the contribution of the ISA to the achievement of as many as 12 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The work of the ISA is of particular importance and relates directly to the achievement of SDG 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. We, therefore, welcome the support of the ISA to the UN Ocean Decade and commend in particular, the active participation and representation in the process leading to the recent adoption of an international legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The BBNJ Agreement recognizes the stewardship of the

ISA for the Area, further reinforcing its unique mandate for the governance of the ocean and its resources.

***Mr. President,***

10. The past year, has been of particular significance to the ISA as the Council continued in its efforts to develop regulations for the exploitation of deep-sea resources in the Area. Although the two-year deadline of 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 was unmet, we are particularly pleased with the constructive participation of Council members and the commitment to continue the process within agreed timelines and in good faith. We note several outstanding issues, including financial aspects of a contract, an independent compliance mechanism, agreement on rates of royalty, equitable benefits sharing and the establishment of environmental thresholds that require the further attention of the Council.

11. The African Group reasserts its strong support for a comprehensive set of rules, regulations and procedures for exploitation, including provisions for the effective protection of the marine environment from serious harm that may be caused by such activities. We also believe that the development of science must accompany these efforts to support evidence-based decision making in the exploitation of the Area. Additionally, we continue to emphasize the importance of

having in place the appropriate institutional and oversight mechanisms for the effective implementation of the regulations.

12. We welcome, in this regard, the establishment by the Council of the position of the Interim Director-General along with the requisite budget allocation as the next stage in the step-by-step approach to the operationalization of the Enterprise. We also call for the timely operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission and urge the action of the Council in this regard.

**Mr. President,**

13. The African Group continues to take deep interest in the specific efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity of developing states as clearly enumerated under the capacity development strategy. We note that some 68 experts have so far benefitted from the Contractors training programme. We support the intention of the Secretariat to establish an alumnus of beneficiaries to serve as a pool of knowledge for developing states.

14. The initiative of working through National Focal Points is a useful approach in ensuring the effective coordination with member states and enhancing the level of participations. We also note other initiatives such as the Deep Diploma Sea

Webinar Series, the Deep Dive and other learning platforms available to experts from developing states.

15. We maintain our support for the Africa Deep Sea Resources Project (ADSR) jointly implemented with the African Union and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation which has served as a platform for enhancing visibility in Africa of the Convention and the work of the ISA. We note the positive outcomes of the workshop held in Abuja and convey our profound appreciation to the Government of Nigeria as the host.

16. We commend the Secretary-General's personal commitment to advancing the employment and leadership of women in ocean affairs and marine scientific research. Initiatives such as the IGROW, and the Women in Deep Sea Research project are vital in addressing the under-representation of women in marine and science-related fields. We congratulate Ms. Rima Browne for receiving the 2023 Secretary-General Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research. Apart from her specific contribution to the mapping of the Cook Island's seabed, she like the previous women awardees demonstrate the capacity of women in a field traditionally considered to be reserved for men.

17. Lastly, while taking a positive note of the reforms undertaken to deliver a Secretariat that is fit for purpose the African Group remains concerned about the persisting under-

representation of African Experts in the senior management and overall staffing of the Secretariat. We therefore reiterate our call to the Secretary-General to take steps to remedy the imbalance with the view to ensuring an equitable geographic representation at the level of the Secretariat.

18. In closing, allow me to reiterate once again, the commitment of the African Group to the mandate of the ISA and our intention to remain active and constructive in our engagements in all the organs of the Authority.

**I thank you.**