



Statement by H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the International Seabed Authority at the general debate on the Annual Report of the Secretary-General of the Authority at its Assembly Meeting of the 28th Session, 26 July 2023, Kingston

Thank You Mr. President, my good friend Dear Ambassador Alhaji Funday Turay,

I am very happy to see you at this important position as I had the privilege of working with you closely in New York.

As I address this Assembly the first time, I warmly congratulate you on your election as the President of the 28th Session of the Assembly. Given your vast experience and diplomatic acumen, I am confident that the Assembly will greatly benefit from your Presidency during this Session.

I thank Secretary-General Michael W. Lodge for his comprehensive presentation on the annual report ISBA/28/A/2, highlighting the Authority's core activities during the last reporting period. We commend the progress of the Authority in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023, with 83 percent of high-level actions completed by 30 May 2023.

Furthermore, I applaud the Secretary-General's support towards the establishment of the Impact Group on Research and Ocean for Women, a crucial initiative to promote women's empowerment in ocean affairs. Bangladesh takes pride in being a founding member of this Impact Group.

The forthcoming technology roadmap, set to be released in 2023, is another laudable effort by the Authority. We firmly believe that this roadmap will play a pivotal role in bolstering sustainable development practices, aiding environmental preservation, and monitoring activities in the Area.

Mr. President,

As an active and contributing member, Bangladesh deeply values the work carried out by the International Seabed Authority, particularly its contributions in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Following the peaceful delimitation of maritime boundaries with our neighboring countries, marine economy has emerged as a new development frontier for Bangladesh. The effective utilization, conservation, and scientific management of marine resources hold the potential for transformative change in the lives of our people. However, we are yet to fully harness these benefits, given challenges such as technology gaps and capacity limitations.

We are grateful for the capacity building support extended to us by the Authority over the past years and eagerly anticipate continuation of this fruitful cooperation for mutual benefit.

Mr. President,

As we deliberate on the Authority and its activities today, I wish to highlight a few points:

First: The Area, known as the "common heritage of mankind," is the harbor of a vast array of biodiversity and environmental treasures. Its crucial role in maintaining the earth's environmental equilibrium through carbon dioxide absorption and climate regulation cannot be overstated.

As our understanding of the immense value of the deep-sea grows, it warrants more urgency than ever to formulate exploitation regulations in order to safeguard biodiversity and environmental wonder in the Area.

In this regard, we welcome the two important decisions adopted by the Council during its 28th Session on two-years rules and roadmap for the completion of the rules, regulations and procedures (RRPs) related to exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.

We are hopeful that the Council will make concrete progress in finalizing these crucial RRP's within the agreed-upon timeline and roadmap. Bangladesh shall remain constructively engaged in this process.

We strongly advocate against approving any work plan for commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area in the absence of rules, regulations and procedures as highlighted in the recently adopted Council's decision. It is imperative to have proper regulations in place to make delicate balance between the economic benefits of exploitation and preservation of our precious environment in the deep sea.

Second: we note that ten countries worldwide have successfully completed the delimitation of their Continental Shelves. In the event that these countries proceed with the exploitation of mineral resources, they are obligated to pay 7% of their revenue to the International Seabed Authority for equitable distribution among states parties. We recommend that the revenue received from mineral resource extraction should be allocated in a manner that prioritizes capacity building and technology transfer among the States Parties.

Third: We appreciate the Authority's foresight in drafting the Strategic Plan 2024-2028 as the next blueprint to support its activities in the Area. An effective strategic plan is essential for providing clear direction, allocating resources efficiently, and addressing potential challenges. We emphasize the importance of adapting the plan to the ever-changing landscape and aligning with the scope of the UNCLOS Convention.

Furthermore, the recently concluded BBNJ Agreement represents a significant milestone in governance of activities the Area. We believe that the principles and provisions outlined in this agreement may be taken into consideration to enhance and enrich the Strategic Plan, providing a solid foundation for the sustainable management of marine resources.

Bangladesh shall remain constructively engaged and will contribute its valuable thoughts and insights to shape the future of this plan.

Four: We express our deep satisfaction with the approval of a supplementary budget for several Enterprise posts. Our gratitude extends to Rear Admiral Khurshed Alam, the Finance Committee Chair, and all members of the Committee for their successful efforts in this regard. This support will enhance the Authority's capabilities and effectiveness in fulfilling its crucial mandates.

Fifth: Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina has envisioned to transform Bangladesh to a developed country by 2041. To achieve this ambitious vision, we recognize the significance of effective partnerships with the ISA Secretariat and all Authority members.

In this endeavor, Bangladesh seeks to foster enhanced collaborations, particularly in the areas of capacity building, technology transfer, and marine scientific research. By leveraging the expertise and resources of the International Seabed Authority, we aim to enhance our capabilities in effectively utilizing our marine resources. These partnerships will play a pivotal role in accelerating our journey towards a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

In conclusion, we warmly welcome Rwanda as the new member of the Authority and look forward to working with them closely on our shared objective.

I thank you Mr. President.