

Statement by the Ambassador of China
At the 28th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority
On the Annual Report of the Secretary General

Jamaica Conference Center, 25th July 2023

Your Excellency, Mr. Secretary-General,
The Honourable Alando Terrelonge,
Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation congratulates you on your election as President of the Assembly at its current session. As always, we pledge our support to you, Mr. President, and your Bureau, believing as we do that under your leadership, the current session will be crowned with success. We also thank the government and people of Jamaica for their longstanding massive support to the International Seabed Authority in its work.

Mr President,

The Chinese delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his annual report which summarizes comprehensively ISA's work in all areas over the past year, a year in which we have worked in unison and in concert and registered progress in developing the regulations on the exploitation of international seabed mineral resources, administering the exploration contracts and implementing the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023, among others. In this connection, China offers its congratulations.

As we speak, international seabed affairs are transitioning from exploration to exploitation, with the development of the exploitation regulations the priority in the work of the Authority. China believes that the promulgation of the regulations will provide clear norms and guidance for exploitation activities in the deep sea and is of great significance for realizing the principle of the common heritage of mankind, ensuring the sustainable use of international

seabed resources and promoting the effective protection of the deep sea environment. The development of rules, regulations and procedures related to exploitation represents not only the right bestowed upon ISA members by UNCLOS, but also an obligation incumbent upon them.

At the Council meeting that just concluded, the parties engaged in in-depth discussions on the co-facilitators' and the Council President's texts and made some headway though many issues still remain which need further study and consultation. China welcomes the new road map reached by the Council as it sets out clear arrangements and provides new impetus for our negotiations in the next step. China will remain constructively engaged in developing the regulations and work with the other parties for an early promulgation of the deep sea exploitation regulations that are equitable and reasonable, that strike a balance between rights and responsibilities, and that accommodate the interest of all countries, the overall interest of the international community and the common interest of mankind as a whole.

Meanwhile, thanks to the joint efforts of all parties, the Council also reached a decision relating to the understanding and application of section 1, paragraph 15 of the Annex to the Implementing Agreement. The Council decided to continue its consideration of possible action by the Council in case of a possible application for a plan of work for exploitation and, after receiving such an application, to consider as soon as possible and as a matter of priority reaching a common understanding on the interpretation and application of Article 15. China calls on the parties to continue, on the basis of actively pushing ahead with the negotiations on the regulations, to fully leverage the Council as a platform for discussing the legal issues relating to an application for exploitation without the mining code in place.

Mr. President,

China appreciates the Authority for the great amount of work performed during the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023. ISA has, through

implementing the strategy direction measures under the Strategic Plan, improved its effectiveness in performance and played an active role in giving effect to the principle of the common heritage of mankind and the SDGs of the United Nations.

China endorses the adoption of the Strategic Plan for 2024-2028, supports increasing attention under the Plan to equitable benefit-sharing and approves of measures in the Strategy Plan for advancing the development of the regulations. We also believe that the ISA Secretariat should further beef up its support for the development of the exploitation regulations.

Mr. President,

China has taken note of the fact that OSPAR adopted a decision on extending to the seabed its scope of marine protection areas. China emphasizes that, in fulfilling their mandates, all international organisations should respect one another, refrain from harming one another and enhance their synergy and coordination. On area-based management tools (ABMTs), all organisations should step up cooperation and consultation as soon as proposals are being drafted. When the proposed measures belong to the remit of another organisation or other organisations, one may make recommendations to the organisation(s) concerned; it would be ill-advised to adopt measures outright. China reiterates that, the Seabed Authority, as the international organisation decided by the Convention to be charged with organizing and controlling activities in the Area, shoulders important functions in governing activities in the Area, including the conservation of the seabed environment. These functions are derived from the legal mandate of the Convention and the 1994 Implementing Agreement and are widely recognized by the international community. China wishes to emphasize the following legal position and make a proposal to the Secretariat relating to its work:

Firstly, China expresses its concern over the implications that OSPAR's

related decision may have on ISA's mandate. Secondly, under international law, OSPAR's decision in question is not binding on non-members. Thirdly, all 169 members of the Seabed Authority are duty-bound to support ISA in its performance of duties according to law. ISA members which are also members of OSPAR should fulfill their responsibility of safeguarding ISA's mandate in their work related to OSPAR. Fourthly, China requests the Secretary-General to draft a report to state in detail the ISA Secretariat's communication with OSPAR over the latter's decision, assess the potential impact of the decision on ISA's mandate, and come up with specific recommendations as to how to safeguard ISA's mandate and enhance cooperation and consultation with relevant organisations for timely discussion by the Council on the issues concerned.

Mr. President,

As a major developing country, China, while engaging in international seabed affairs, has been trying its utmost to uplift the capabilities of other developing countries in deep sea activities. For many years, we have continued to contribute to ISA's voluntary trust funds and the Endowment Fund for Ocean Scientific Research. This year, we made another contribution of US\$40,000 to the voluntary trust fund in support of developing country members in participating in meetings of the LTC and Finance Committee and in support of people from developing countries in participating in seabed scientific research.

In addition, China has continued to promote energetically the development of the ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre. In May 2022, we successfully held the first online training workshop for international personnel for the exploration and exploitation of deep sea resources and provided 55 students from over 20 developing countries with training. This year, the Centre will follow by running a second training workshop which offers 30 positions for offline training. Now, the Secretariat has opened the window for registration. We invite other developing countries, in particular, the LDCs and SIDS to

actively select their students and apply to the Secretariat by the 31st of August. China stands ready to continue increasing the dovetailing and deepening the cooperation with the Seabed Authority to work in synergy for greater efficiency and effectiveness and join hands in promoting our common goal, namely, the sustainable development of the ocean.

Mr President,

The seas and oceans are mankind's share space for existence and development. China is ready to work with all parties, uphold the concept of a community of shared future for mankind, practice genuine multilateralism and continue to advance the deep sea undertaking so as to make greater contributions to the common interest and welfare of humankind.

Thank you, Mr. President.