

Statement by Pakistan at the general debate on the Annual Report of the Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority, Kingston, Jamaica

25 July 2023

**Mr. President,
Honorable Secretary General,
Distinguished Excellencies and delegates,**

At the outset, Pakistan delegation warmly congratulates the elected President and the Vice Presidents of the 28th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority. Our delegation thanks the Secretary General for his extensive annual report and appreciate the Secretariat for their support.

2. The report provides an overview of the progress made by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) since July 2022 to implement its unique and exclusive mandate to manage the Area and the minerals it contains for the benefit of humankind on the basis of the principles set out in UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement.

Mr. President,

3. It is heartening to note that the ISA is committed to ensuring that its programmes and initiatives to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its constituent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14 (Life below water).

4. The first ISA Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 has proved to be beneficial over the past four years as the basis for a comprehensive strategic framework to guide the work of ISA. ISA has successfully mobilized and implemented an increasing number of new strategic partnerships and engagements, such as the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative, the Women in Deep Sea Research Project and, most recently, the ISA Partnership Fund.

5. Pakistan looks forward to engaging with the Member States on the draft Strategic Plan of the ISA for the period of 2024-2028. The draft plan shared with the Member States provides an overview of the key priorities and high-level actions needed to achieve the strategic objectives of the Authority.

Mr. President,

6. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which covers the period 2021–2030, provides an important opportunity to improve ocean sustainability by increasing understanding and providing scientific support for policies and innovations that enhance the sustainable development of the ocean.

7. Yet, many developing States continue to face challenges in strengthening the means of implementation and in developing partnerships for ocean sustainability. This coupled with inadequate availability and access to financing and investments for the development of sustainable ocean-based economies has caused a major challenge for the countries in Global South. Capacity building initiatives, including the transfer of marine technology are, therefore, imperative to address such challenges.

8. The legal regime for the deep seabed under Part XI of UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement is based on two core expectations: that the regime would have a universal character and that due attention would be given to the interests and needs of developing countries. In this regard, Pakistan appreciates a dedicated strategy of the ISA on capacity building, which is important to bridge the North-South gap and to effectively realize the principle of the common heritage of humankind.

9. As deep-seabed mining technology continues to develop rapidly, including technology for monitoring the impacts of mining on the marine environment, there is a need for greater attention to the implications and modalities for implementation of UNCLOS, Article 144, based on the technological needs of developing States. We note with appreciation the establishment of a group of experts by the Secretary General to review the role of the ISA with respect to technology transfer and provide strategic guidance and recommendations on the implementation of Article 144. In this regard, we look forward to the report, which is expected to be released later this year or early next year.

Mr. President,

10. Equitable sharing of the financial and other economic benefits from activities in the Area is an essential element of the legal regime created by Part XI of UNCLOS.

11. The recently adopted BBNJ Agreement will also be a significant addition to the existing international ocean governance framework and will allow humanity to continue to enjoy, indiscriminately, the social, economic and environmental benefits that the high seas have to offer.

Mr. President,

12. While my delegation continues to follow the ongoing negotiations on the deep seabed mining code in the ISA Council with interest, in our view, a robust and comprehensive regime for exploitation, including rules on equitable benefit sharing should be in place before mining could commence anywhere in the "Area". In this regard, Pakistan welcomes the recent decision adopted by the Council in which the Council considers that the commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area should not be carried out in the absence of these rules and "intends to" continue the elaboration of these rules and regulations with a view to their adoption during the 30th session of the Authority.

13. In conclusion, the Government of Pakistan is fully committed to the work of ISA and is open to cooperate and collaborate with other friendly nations for this purpose.

I thank you
