

Review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the International Seabed Authority for 2019-2023

July 12, 2023

Revised version containing additional inputs from stakeholders' interviews undertaken in June and July 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

In July 2018, the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) adopted the first Strategic Plan for the ISA covering the period 2019-2023 ([ISBA/24/A/10](#)). The adoption of the strategic plan marked an important evolution in the work of the organization. The plan, developed after extensive stakeholder consultation, aimed to be “action-oriented” and pragmatic, emphasizing the priorities for the Authority as identified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Agreement for the implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS.

The five-year timespan of the first strategic plan was intended to allow enough flexibility for the content of the plan to be adjusted if necessary, considering evolving challenges and priorities. The plan was supported by a High-Level Action Plan (HLAP), adopted in 2020, ([ISBA/25/A/15](#)), including key performance indicators and a list of results to be achieved for the period 2019-2023.

The key priorities identified in the strategic plan were primarily directed by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, in particular section 1 (5) of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, which sets out the matters on which ISA will concentrate between the entry into force of UNCLOS and the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation. The Plan also considered: (a) the status of implementation by ISA of the priorities set out in the 1994 Agreement and other activities mandated by the Council; (b) ISA’s current and projected workload, resources and capacity for the period of the strategic plan; and (c) other relevant international agreements, processes, principles and objectives, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹

The Secretary-General is required to submit a revised Strategic Plan for consideration and adoption by the Assembly at its 28th session. It is proposed that this plan would cover the period 2024-2028. To inform its work and subsequent consultations on a draft strategic plan, the Secretariat hired a consultant between January 2023 and March 2023,² selected following a public tender, to carry out a review of the implementation of the first plan by all ISA organs between 2019 and 2023. The present report sets out the key findings of the review.

A key finding of this report is that the implementation of the first strategic plan of ISA contributed in a material way to reinforce the delivery of the unique and broad mandate and functions assigned to ISA by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, particularly at a time when the organization is transitioning from managing deep sea exploration to regulating future exploitation of seabed minerals in the Area.

Another key finding of this report is that much of the context and many of the challenges identified in the first strategic plan remain equally relevant today. These contextual challenges reflected the changes that have occurred since the entry into force of UNCLOS almost 30 years ago and that have accompanied the evolution of ISA since 1994. This key finding only reinforces the critical need for continuity whilst at the same time the need for ongoing flexibility to ensure that ISA can continue to respond, with the support of its members and broader range of stakeholders, to the priorities identified by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement.

While UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement establish clear legal parameters for the initial stages of ISA’s development, they also highlight the need for ISA and its organs and subsidiary bodies to evolve over time with a view to effectively implementing its responsibilities, particularly in relation

¹ See [ISBA/24/A/10](#), annex, para.6.

² The consultant was Mr Eduardo Rombauer van den Bosch (Brazil).

to the organization and control of exploitation activities and the redistribution of benefits to all humanity (often referred to as 'the evolutionary approach').

II. METHODOLOGY

A range of 30 individuals representing 22 different stakeholders was interviewed for this report, who were identified to reflect the diversity of views they could bring to the discussion, their specific interests and history of engagement in the work of ISA. All were interviewed remotely based on a list of questions aimed at assessing their perception of the main achievements and limitations in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023. The list of interviewees may be found in Annex I.

The majority of stakeholders interviewed for this report recognized the difficulty and complexity of the mandate assigned to ISA in discharging its functions which ultimately, pursuant to UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, should support the *“orderly, safe and responsible management and development of the resources of the Area for the benefit of mankind as whole, including by ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment in accordance with sound principles of conservation and contribution to agreed international objectives and principles, including the Sustainable Development Goals”*.³

Box 1: list of questions for interviews with stakeholders

1. What has been your main role and learnings in working with ISA?
2. How do you think the Strategic Plan (A/24/A/10) and associated High-Level Action Plan (ISBA/25/A/15) have contributed to fulfilling the mission of ISA (as per the mission statement included in the Strategic Plan)?
3. To what extent do you think the work of ISA provides a useful model for sustainable management of the global commons?
4. Looking at the expected outcomes of the Strategic Plan identified in ISBA/24/A/10, section V) where do you think the most progress has been made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and associated High-Level Action Plan?
5. Where do you think the least progress has been made?
6. Section III of ISBA/24/A/10) identifies some of the main challenges facing the Authority.
 - a. Are these challenges still relevant?
 - b. Which of these challenges has benefited the most from the implementation of the Strategic Plan and associated High-Level Action Plan?
 - c. Have any of these challenges increased or decreased?
7. What key alliances should ISA develop within and outside the UN system to help meet its main challenges?
8. How do you see the mandate and work of ISA by 2030?
9. What should be the priority for the ISA for the next 5 years?
10. Do you have any recommendations for the next Strategic Plan?

³ Mission Statement of the Strategic Plan of the Authority for 2019-2023; ISBA/24/A/10, para.7.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2019-2023

This section of the report is designed to present an overview of the status of implementation of the strategic plan. The first part identifies some of the main elements of context which have affected the implementation of the strategic plan. The second part presents a summary analysis of the implementation of each Strategic Direction against the performance indicators contained in the HLAP. This part is based on extensive analysis of the official documents and reports of ISA, as well as stakeholder interviews. The third part of this section presents a summary of the main achievements and limitations of the strategic plan from the perspective of stakeholders.

3.1 Global context within which the Strategic Plan has been implemented.

To evaluate the implementation of the Strategic Plan, one must first contemplate some of the most relevant elements of context which have directly influenced the process of implementation and its results along the years of implementation of the strategic plan.

- **COVID-19 pandemic:** Like every other international organization, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the activities of ISA, both in terms of its administrative operations and the progress of its regulatory work. These impacts included temporary disruption of face-to-face meetings and sessions in 2020 and 2021, limiting the opportunities for face-to-face engagement and negotiations and leading to delays in taking decisions. Pandemic-related travel restrictions made it difficult or impossible for staff to travel to some countries, leading to delays or cancellations of planned work and activities. ISA contractors were also impacted by the pandemic, leading to disruption of fieldwork, training and research activities. act on the overall progress of the ISA's regulatory work.
- **An evolving international global policy landscape:** ISA's mandate exists and is implemented within a larger global system of ocean governance. Whilst UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement remain at the heart of, and critical to, that system, ISA's work must be considered in the context of the evolving landscape of other relevant international frameworks, agreements and policy agendas. During the past five years, these have included the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the opportunities the Blue Economy provides to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022, and the conclusion of the BBNJ Agreement in early 2023. Other particularly relevant political processes include those aimed at setting collective priorities for developing countries, such as the Doha Programme of Action for least developed countries (LDCs), Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing States (LLDCs) and the SAMOA pathway for small island developing States (SIDS).
- **Increasing demand for ocean science.** There is a broad consensus that acquisition of scientific knowledge through research and international collaboration is fundamental to ensuring sustainability of the ocean and its resources for future generations. This is reflected in UNCLOS itself, as well as multiple international declarations, including in the Declaration of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference held in Lisbon, Portugal. In this context, ISA's mandate for advancing scientific knowledge and understanding of deep-sea ecosystems and functions is essential to support informed decision-making processes and the continued application of the precautionary approach for activities carried out in the Area. Of relevance in this regard is the synergy between the strategic plan and the Action

Plan for Marine Scientific Research in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science adopted by the ISA Assembly in 2020 (MSR Action Plan).⁴

- **Increasing complexity in the functions and activities ISA carries out.** As ISA moves towards the establishment of a strong regulatory framework for exploitation of the resources of the Area, and as activities in the Area have advanced and matured, there has been an increase in the complexity of the functions and activities that the ISA must carry out in performing its core role as regulator. This increased complexity is reflected in the increased size and complexity of annual reporting the ISA Secretariat and the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) are required to handle, increased quantities of exploration data (resource and environmental), and the need to manage environmental impact assessments (EIA) and inspections. A key process under development relates to the conduct of EIAs to evaluate the potential environmental and social impacts of mining activities. This involves collecting data on biodiversity, ecosystem function, and potential impacts of mineral-related activities on other human activities in the ocean. Inspection activities will also be a crucial part of ISA's functions during exploitation. Inspectors will be responsible for verifying compliance with regulations, monitoring environmental impact, and ensuring the safety of workers and equipment. Specific mechanisms have been put in place to verify and monitor compliance during the exploration phase whilst the Council continues to discuss the regime, mechanisms and processes to be implemented during exploitation. Overall, the transition from exploration to exploitation will bring important changes in the way ISA operates. While exploration activities primarily focus on identifying and assessing minerals of economic value and establishing environmental baselines, the exploitation phase will necessitate an increased focus on EIA, monitoring, compliance and inspection.

3.2 Analysis of achievements against performance indicators

This section presents a summary of the progress of implementation of the strategic plan against each Strategic Direction outlined in the plan. It is based on an analysis of the official documents and publications available on the ISA website, as well as the work undertaken by the organs and subsidiary bodies of ISA, measured against the key performance indicators set out in the HLAP and supplemented by information from interviews carried out with a range of stakeholders (see Section 3.3).

Strategic Direction 1 – Realize the role of the Authority in a global context.

Strategic direction 1 aims at ensuring that ISA, in its role of custodian of the common heritage of humankind, contributes to the timely and effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 14 “(...) *through implementing the economic, environmental and social mandates assigned to it under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement*”.⁵ SD1 is further broken down into five distinct themes including aligning programmes and activities towards the realization of those SDGs relevant to its mandate; establishing and strengthening strategic alliances and partnerships; building a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the development of the common heritage; promoting the effective and uniform implementation of the legal regime of the Area; and strengthening cooperation and coordination with other relevant international organization and stakeholders.

⁴ https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ISA_MSRActionPlan.pdf

⁵ ISBA/24/A/10, Annex, para.9.

The HLAP identifies six different performance indicators (PIs) for measuring the implementation of Strategic Direction 1. Two relate to the specific activities implemented by ISA to realize its mission in line with the 2030 Agenda (PI [1.1](#)) and more specifically to improve cooperation with regional and global organizations in support of the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources (PI [1.2](#)).

To establish a baseline for the implementation of SD1, the Secretary-General commissioned in 2021 an independent study on the contribution of ISA, through its mandate, to the SDGs.⁶ The study identified that ISA's mandate makes a meaningful contribution to 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 14 (Life below water), SDG 15 (Life on land), SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The report made several recommendations where ISA members and the Secretariat could strengthen working practices within ISA and highlighted how resourcing constraints could limit ISA's ability to be proactive in addressing its current challenges.

By 2019, when the strategic plan was adopted, the first set of six voluntary commitments registered by ISA at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference⁷ were in the process of implementation. These included: (i) enhancing the role of women in marine scientific research, (ii) encouraging the dissemination of research results through the ISA Secretary-General Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research, (iii) dedicated capacity development activities for Pacific Island sponsoring States through the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth, and (iv) fostering cooperation for the promotion of the sustainable development of Africa's blue economy through the Africa Deep-Sea Resources (ADSR) project. Five years later, these voluntary commitments have been realized in the form of dedicated projects in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders and continue to serve the objectives identified under each of them. Four new voluntary commitments were registered at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference⁸ and five other initiatives have been launched since then (see [annex 1](#)). All clearly identify in their objectives the need to contribute to the 2030 Agenda, which reflects strongly on the efforts engaged by ISA to align as much as possible its actions towards global collective actions and to create synergies with other competent entities.

Other programmes and initiatives of ISA relevant to SD1 include the development and implementation of regional environmental management plans in the Area; the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SsKI) to advance deep-sea taxonomy in areas beyond national jurisdiction; the establishment of ISA's DeepData database; the inception of a pilot demonstration project for long-term oceanographic observation in the Area; the AREA2030 initiative; cooperation with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries to support the ocean economies of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS; the activities implemented through the ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre; promoting deep-sea literacy and; advancing empowerment and leadership of women in ocean affairs including through the Women in the Law of the Sea initiative (see table 1).

Table 1: Initiatives overseen by ISA that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

⁶ ISA, [The contribution of the International Seabed Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), 2021.

⁷ [ISBA/24/A/2](#), para. 47

⁸ [ISBA/28/A/2](#).

Initiative	Contribution to SDGs
Voluntary commitments	
Advancing women’s empowerment in marine scientific research	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (partnership for the goals).
ISA Secretary-General Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research	SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (partnership for the goals)
Long-term oceanographic observations in support of sustainable development of deep seabed resources	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals)
Advancing deep-sea taxonomy	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).
Abyssal initiative for blue growth	SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequality) and SDG 14 (life below water)
Fostering cooperation to promote the sustainable development of Africa’s deep seabed resources in support to Africa’s Blue Economy	SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequality) and SDG 14 (life below water)
Supporting sustainable and emerging ocean economies of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS	SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), SDG 17 (partnership for the goals).
Promoting deep-sea literacy in support of inclusive stewardship of the Area and its resources for the benefit of humankind	SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), SDG 17 (partnership for the goals).
Other programmatic initiatives	
Regional environmental management plans (REMPS)	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).
ISA-China JTRC	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 4 (quality education), as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).
DeepData	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).
Women in the Law of the Sea	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).
AREA2030	SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), as well as to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

Notable efforts have also been made to establish strategic alliances and partnerships with global and regional organizations with a view to improving cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources. In that respect, seven such organizations had been identified in 2019. As of May 2023, ISA has established collaborations with 20 different entities both at global (UN-DOALOS; CBD Secretariat, OBIS-IOC, UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries) and regional levels (African Union, IORA) as well as national entities leading regional initiatives in that field (MABIK (Korea), National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (Egypt), National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (New Zealand), National Maritime Foundation (India), the Research and Information Services for Developing Countries (India), the Sargasso Sea Commission, and the World Register of Ocean Species (WORMS)).

Other indicators identified in the HLAP relate directly to the engagement of States Parties towards the fundamental legal instruments guiding the work of ISA. One new instrument of ratification or accession to UNCLOS has been deposited over the last five years (PI 1.3), three more States became party to the 1994 Agreement⁹ (PI 1.4), one State also ratified the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of ISA (PI 1.5) and two more states have deposited their charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points establishing the limits of national jurisdiction, including the delineation of the continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles (PI 1.6) (see [annex II](#)). These developments reflect the increased importance given by States to UNCLOS which, with the adoption in March 2023 of the BBNJ Agreement, reinforces further the mandate and functions of ISA in global ocean governance.

Strategic Direction 2: Strengthen the regulatory framework for activities in the Area.

The primary mechanism by which ISA fulfills its mandate to organize and control activities in the Area is by adopting and implementing rules, regulations and procedures to operationalize the regime set out in Part XI and annex III of UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement.

The latter stipulates that such rules, regulations and procedures should be adopted as activities in the Area progress. Five years ago, members of ISA agreed that the challenge to be addressed by ISA between 2019 and 2023 was to “adopt sound and balanced regulations for exploitation” that should “(...) *reflect the best international standards and practices, as well as agreed principles of sustainable development*”.¹⁰ Members of ISA also identified in the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 the “*need for regulatory certainty, with clear requirements to ensure environmental protection and clear financial terms*” as a prerequisite to the conduct of activities in the Area,¹¹ with an associated performance indicator (PI 2.1) relating to the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures as well as standards and guidelines covering all phases of mineral exploration and exploitation . Notable progress has been made in this regard with the submission in 2019 by the LTC of draft exploitation regulations to the Council¹² and subsequent review of that draft by the Council. Whilst the regulations remain incomplete, there has been a marked increase in the pace of the meetings of the Council¹³ and the adoption, in both 2021 and 2022, of roadmaps¹⁴ to guide further

⁹ Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda.

¹⁰ ISBA/24/A/10, Annex, para.11.

¹¹ ISBA/24/A/19, Annex, para.12.

¹² ISBA/25/C/WP.1; ISBA/25/C/18.

¹³ The Council set itself a target date of 2020 to adopt the regulations. Following consideration of the draft prepared by the LTC at Part II of the 25th session in July 2019, the Council agreed to open the regulations to a further round of consultations; ISBA/25/C/37.

¹⁴ ISBA/26/C/44, annex; ISBA/27/C/21/Add.2, annex 2.

negotiations, ensuring that the Council does not lose sight of the ultimate objective of adopting a sound regulatory framework. The LTC has also developed and submitted to the Council 10 standards and guidelines (so-called Phase One Standards and Guidelines).¹⁵

In parallel, the number of sponsoring States that have enacted national laws and regulations governing and administering contractors' activities in the Area (PI 2.2) has increased to 38¹⁶ (see annex 1). The support provided by ISA to member States in relation to the implementation of the legal regime governing activities in the Area (PI 2.3) remained stable whilst the number of programmes and initiatives implemented by ISA which contribute to address the specific challenges faced by developing States in implementing international legal instruments governing activities in the Area (PI 2.4) increased significantly between 2019 and 2023. As of May 2023, eleven such programmes and¹⁷ initiatives had been developed. These aim at addressing the challenges and needs identified by ISA Members themselves (see annex II). An area where ISA seems to have been particularly successful is in relation to addressing the challenges and needs faced by LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS through active participation in the discussions pertaining to the respective global development agendas (Doha Programme of Action, Vienna Programme of Action and SAMOA Pathway) for these groups of States in line with the priorities identified by ISA Members themselves. ISA has continued to engage in ministerial meetings held by each of these groups to discuss progress and renewed priorities¹⁸ and has delivered concrete activities such as a set of publications on the specific rights and obligations recognized to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS under UNCLOS¹⁹ and the establishment of dedicated technical assistance programmes in cooperation with the UN Technology Bank for LDCs and IORA.

Strategic Direction 3: protect the marine environment.

Ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from activities undertaken in the Area, through the development of rules, regulations and procedures, is a core component of ISA's mandate. Accordingly, and pursuant to UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement which provides that the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures incorporating applicable standards to the protection and preservation of the marine environment is one of the matters on which ISA needs to concentrate between the entry into force of UNCLOS and the approval of the first plan of work (1994 Agreement, annex, sect.1 (5) (g)), members have paid particular attention to the development of a policy and regulatory framework for environmental management that would achieve such effective protection of the marine environment, albeit under circumstances of considerable scientific, technical and commercial uncertainty.

The performance of ISA in this regard (PI 3.1), can be assessed through the fact that in the last five years, in addition to the five sets of recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States promulgated by the LTC, a substantive set of provisions has been developed and is being discussed as part of the negotiations pertaining to the adoption of the draft exploitation regulations and the Phase One Standards and Guidelines (see annex 1).

¹⁵ ISBA/27/A/2, illustrated report, p.34.

¹⁶ <https://www.isa.org.jm/national-legislation-database/>

¹⁷ ISBA/24/A/10, para.13.

¹⁸ ISBA/27/A/2; ISBA/28/A/2.

¹⁹ See [ISA, Least developed countries and the law of the sea : an ocean of opportunity, 2021](#) ; [ISA, Landlocked developing countries and the law of the sea : an ocean of opportunity, 2021](#); [ISA, Small island developing States and the law of the sea : an ocean of opportunity, 2021](#).

Two other important indicators relate to the number of regional environmental management plans (REMPs) adopted and implemented (PI [3.2](#)) and the number of areas of particular environmental interest (APEI) established (PI [3.3](#)). The first REMP for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone was reviewed in 2021 and the number of its APEIs increased from nine to 13 resulting in a total area of 1.97 million km² of protected seabed.²⁰ Progress has also been made to develop a standardized approach to the development of REMPS in other ocean regions and work has progressed on the development of REMPs for the Northern part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the Indian Ocean, and the North-West Pacific Ocean.²¹ In all cases, data collected through DeepData have been made available in open access (PI [3.4](#)). As of today, more than 50,000 taxonomic records were made available from DeepData for the CCZ.

Strategic Direction 4: Promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area.

SD4 emphasizes the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area as well as the coordination and dissemination of the results of such research and analysis when available, as a critical condition for achieving responsible management of the Area and its resources.²² Priority has been assigned to adopting strategies and seeking adequate resources to enable ISA to increase its capacity to strengthen cooperation with States Parties, the international scientific community, contractors and relevant international organizations to obtain, assess and disseminate quantitative and qualitative data and information in an open and transparent manner.²³

Critical steps in that regard include the adoption by the Assembly of ISA in December 2020, of the MSR Action Plan, placing ISA as the first and only intergovernmental organization with such a strategy. In 2022, a dedicated post within the Secretariat was created to coordinate the implementation of the MSR Action Plan, and particularly to improve coordination among relevant stakeholders. These efforts have led to an increase in the number and quality of strategic alliances and partnerships established, all of which contribute through different initiatives launched and activities implemented, to the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area (PI [4.1](#)). In 2023, 19 such partnerships were recorded against four in 2013 (see [annex II](#)).

The breadth and depth of such partnerships can be assessed in a more substantive manner through relevant reports produced every year.²⁴ What can be noted here is that these partnerships have enabled direct participation of relevant agencies of States Parties (CSIRO Australia, MABIK of Korea, National History Museum of UK, National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt, National Oceanographic Center of UK, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research of New Zealand, National Research Council of Italy), contractors, the scientific community (DOOS, World Register of Ocean Species, DEEP-REST project, SMARTEX project, TRIDENT project, JPI Ocean) as well as relevant international (IOC-UNESCO, IHO, CBD Secretariat, UN Technology Bank for LDCs) and regional organizations (African Union, IORA).

Important efforts have also been made to enhance and expand the sharing of data and information (PI [4.3](#)) through new strategic partnerships ([see annex II](#)). Simultaneously, activities including regular workshops are being organized by or in partnership with ISA where the role of scientific knowledge in support of the effective protection of the marine environment is discussed (PI [4.4](#)).

²⁰ ISBA/27/A/2, illustrated report, p.37.

²¹ ISBA/28/A/2.

²² ISBA/24/A/10, para.15.

²³ ISBA/24/A/10, para.17.

²⁴ ISBA/27/A/4, ISBA/28/A/8

In so doing, ISA gives specific attention to ensure the participation of experts from developing States including those from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, women, and former ISA trainees.

Performance indicator 4.2 refers to “*the ability of the Authority to disseminate research results and analyses through its database*” (PI 4.2). A key achievement in that regard was the launch of the new DeepData database in July 2019, reflecting the work undertaken by the Secretariat, in close collaboration with the LTC and contractors, to collect, standardize and make available data and information gathered over the last 40 years of exploration in the Area. Recently, efforts have been invested in using these data to assess data quality of oceanographic data in the Indian Ocean and North-West Pacific, as well as in support of the development of the REMP for the Northern part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and to better understand potential interactions between fishing and mineral resources-related activities (see annex II).

Strategic Direction 5: Build capacity for developing States.

Building and developing capacity of developing States as well as developing and implementing measures to facilitate technology transfer is part of the core mandate of ISA. Different performance indicators reflect the importance of this mandate and the efforts that have been engaged by the organization on this. Of particular importance is the attention that has been given to ensure that capacity development activities reflect the needs of developing States Members of ISA (PI 5.1). Following the release in 2020 of a review of all capacity building activities implemented by ISA since it was established²⁵, the first ever comprehensive assessment of members’ capacity development priorities and needs was undertaken in 2020.²⁶ On the basis of this assessment specific and tailored activities have been developed and implemented, including the ADSR project and the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth, as well as projects launched in collaboration with IORA [*“Promoting deep-sea research in the Indian Ocean to advance knowledge and understanding in support of seabed mineral exploration”*] and UNTBLDC [*“Building and developing capacities of least developed countries in deep-sea related science, technology and innovation in support of sustainable development of blue emerging economies”*]. The establishment of a network of National Focal Points for Capacity Development (NAFOPs) in 2021 consolidated such efforts by ensuring effective exchange of information and direct input on activities being implemented. As of May 2023, 59 National Focal points have been nominated, of which 12% represent LDCs, 7% LLDCs and 14% SIDS.

Performance Indicator 5.2 is the number of qualified personnel of developing States who have participated in capacity-building or development activities of ISA (PI 5.2). The evaluation of this indicator depends upon how capacity building or development activities are defined. If defined strictly in terms of participation in the contractor training programme, internship programme, and Endowment Fund training (see below), the data shows a marked upward trend from about 2017 onwards, albeit with some delays caused by Covid-19 related travel disruptions. If, on the other hand, activities are defined more broadly, it can be observed that between July 2022 and July 2023, more than 380 individuals benefited from at least one capacity development opportunity implemented by ISA.²⁷

Although some work has been initiated to identify indicators to assess the long-term impact of capacity development activities implemented for receiving countries (PI 5.3), no clear monitoring

²⁵ <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Review-Of-Capacity-Building-Programmes-And-Initiatives-By-ISA.pdf>

²⁶ ISBA/27/A/2, illustrated report, p.44.

²⁷ ISBA/28/A/2, illustrated report.

framework has been put in place yet. Further work is being undertaken by the Secretariat in this regard, and it must be noted that the capacity development unit in the Secretariat has only two staff positions, with no provision for monitoring and evaluation. Despite this lack of capacity, it is noteworthy that the Secretariat established a capacity-building dashboard on its website, which provides access to detailed information on participation to different capacity development initiatives, with a number of filters and ways to view the data, e.g., per year, per country or region, per gender, per type of programme, etc. Statistics of trainees from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are also provided.

In 2021, a new webinar series was introduced to provide information to diplomats on the role and mandate of ISA and since then, more than 300 individuals have benefited from this initiative.

An area where ISA has made an important and globally recognized contribution is in relation to advancing women's empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research. The enhanced inclusion of women in marine scientific research forms the core of the Voluntary Commitment registered by ISA in 2017 and renewed in 2022 under the heading, 'Advancing women's empowerment in marine scientific research' (#OceanAction40786). This led to the conception of the Women in Deep-Sea Research Project²⁸ currently implemented in close collaboration with more than 20 partners representing States Parties (Argentina, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Madagascar, Malta, Nauru, Nigeria, South Africa), scientific entities (MABIK-Korea, National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt, the National Oceanography Centre, UK), international (UNDESA, IGF) and regional organizations (IORA, SPC) and the private sector (Blue Minerals Jamaica, BGR, DORD, GSR, IFREMER, MARAWA, NORI, TOML, UK Seabed Resources). ISA's commitment is also reflected in the MSR Action Plan. In June 2022, ISA published a gender mapping of deep-sea research and related disciplines and activities in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.²⁹ An indicator of the results achieved is the increase in the number of qualified women having participated in capacity development activities implemented under the auspices of ISA (PI 5.4). As of May 2023, more than 120 women had benefited from such activities through the CPT.³⁰ All capacity development projects implemented by ISA contain a mandatory element pertaining to gender representation. One such example is the Contractor Training Programme, where contractors have been urged to reserve at least 50% of places for qualified women. To date, 9 contractors have agreed to implement such recommendation (BGR, Blue Minerals Jamaica, DORD, GSR, IFREMER, Marawa, NORI, TOML, UK Seabed Resources).

PI 5.5 and PI 5.6 concern the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research (EFMSR) and measure the availability of funds and the number of qualified personnel having benefited from training under the EFMSR. It should be noted that the activities of the EFMSR ceased in 2020 following a review of its functioning.³¹ In 2022, the Assembly of ISA established the ISA Partnership Fund, with terms of reference which allow the Partnership Fund to draw down up to USD 400,000 per year from the EFMSR until 2026 to support capacity development activities in a more strategic and targeted way. Several States Parties, including Mexico, France and Greece, have already contributed to the ISA Partnership Fund. A Partnership Board has also been established, as the governance mechanism for the fund, and will meet for the first time in 2023. No non-member of ISA has yet contributed to the EFMSR or to the ISA Partnership Fund.

²⁸ <https://www.isa.org.jm/capacity-development-training-and-technical-assistance/widsr-project/>

²⁹ https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/WIDSR_Executive_Summary.pdf

³⁰ ISBA/28/A/8

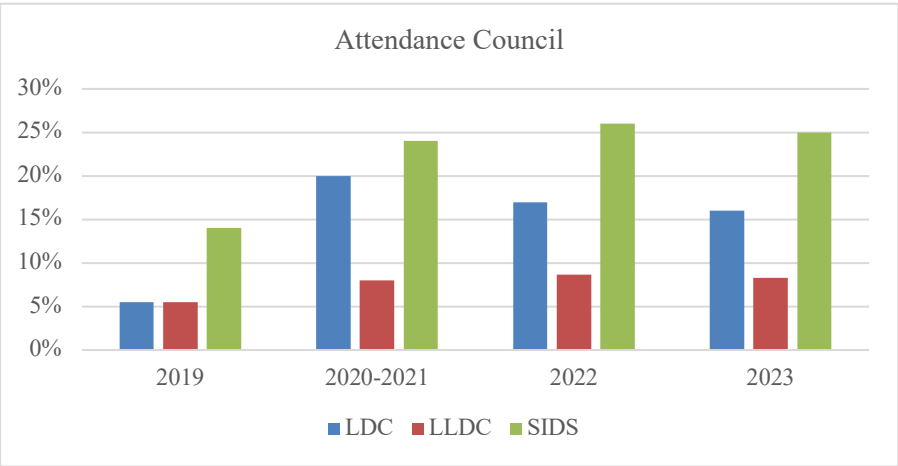
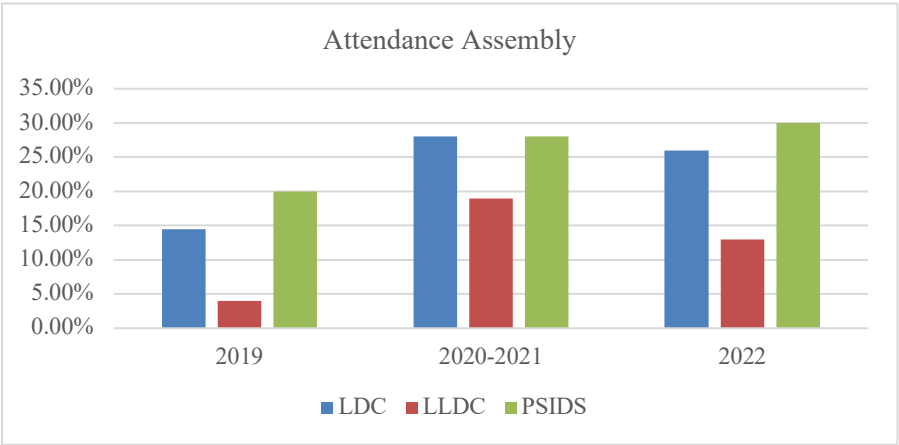
³¹ [ISBA/26/A/7](#).

In July 2022, the adoption of the first ever Capacity Development Strategy of ISA was adopted by the Assembly to guide the conception and implementation of programmes based on priorities identified by ISA members.

Strategic Direction 6: Ensure fully integrated participation by developing States

A specific responsibility assigned to ISA by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, is to promote the participation of developing States in activities in the Area. Different indicators have been agreed on by ISA members to assess performance against this strategic direction. Analysis of the total number and rate of attendance by developing States to ISA meetings (PI 6.1) shows that as of 2022, 44.5% of ISA Members which qualify as developing States under the UN categorization have participated in meetings of the Assembly. As for the Council, 96% (24) of the developing States elected to the Council participated in its meetings. Of particular interest is to note the increased participation of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in meetings of the Assembly and the Council between 2019 and 2022 (See annex II and figures 2a and 2b).

Figures 2a and 2b: Participation of LDCs, LLDCS and SIDS in meetings of the Assembly and Council from 2019 to 2022 (percentage of total attendance)



Amongst the factors that could explain an increased participation of developing States in the Council as well as the LTC and Finance Committee may be the availability of funds in the voluntary trust funds (VTF) created for that purpose by the Assembly.³² Performance indicator 6.4 measures the total contributions made to the VTFs. Between 2019 and 2022, the contributions made to these funds amounted to USD 331,161 (Table 2).

Table 2: total contributions made to the VTFs for the LTC/FC and Council between 2019 and 2022

Organ	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Legal & Technical/ Finance	52,510	80,000	98,949	60,000	291,459
Council	7,502	-	22,200	10,000	39,702
Total	60,012	80,000	121,149	70,000	331,161

During the same period, 24 individuals from developing States benefited from the VTF for the Council (PI 6.3). 44 members of the Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee from developing countries also benefited from the fund created for that purpose (note: some members benefited more than once) (PI 6.2).

Another indicator identified by ISA members to assess the performance of the organization in ensuring the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area relates to the operationalization of the Enterprise and specifically the identification of possible approaches to the independent operation of the Enterprise (PI 6.5). In this respect, the Secretary-General appointed in 2019 a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Enterprise. The LTC also commissioned a study on the operationalization of the Enterprise in 2019³³ and recommended to the Council to establish a position within the Secretariat of interim director-general of the Enterprise.³⁴ Whilst this position was not approved for the financial period 2021-2022, the Council had decided in 2023 to approve the recommendation of the LTC and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a supplementary budget proposal for consideration in July 2023 relating to the establishment of the post of interim director-general of the Enterprise within the Secretariat.

Strategic Direction 7: Ensure equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits.

As part of its mandate, ISA is tasked with the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area.³⁵ Similar rules, regulations and procedures must also be adopted for the distribution of payments and contributions made through ISA under article 82(4) of UNCLOS in respect of the exploitation of the non-living resources of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. It is in this context that ISA members identified the need for ISA to “*understand the financial and economic model for deep-seabed mining in an environment of considerable commercial uncertainty, including the trends of and the factors affecting supply, demand and prices of minerals which may be derived*

³² ISBA/27/A/2, illustrated report.

³³ https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/enterprise_study.pdf

³⁴ ISBA/26/C/12, para.41.

³⁵ UNCLOS, art.140(2).

*from the Area, bearing in mind the interests of both importing and exporting countries, and in particular of the developing States among them”.*³⁶

The only relevant performance indicator identified by ISA Members to assess the performance of the organization in delivering against this strategic direction relates to the adoption of a mechanism for providing for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits (PI **7.1**). Although no such mechanism had been adopted as of May 2023, important progress has been achieved since 2019, particularly in the context of the work of the Finance Committee. During this period, the Finance Committee considered questions relating to article 140 of UNCLOS (equitable distribution of benefits from activities in the Area) and article 82(4) in parallel and issued several reports for consideration by the Council and the Assembly. The Committee also worked on alternative solutions to direct distribution to States Parties, and specifically on the possible establishment of a Seabed Sustainability Fund. In July 2021, the Finance Committee submitted a comprehensive progress report to the Council and the Assembly, which also forms the basis for its work plan on this topic from 2023 (when the new membership of the Finance Committee took office) and built the foundation for further progress at the technical level. The Secretariat also issued a Technical Study on the issue of benefit-sharing (Technical Study 31).

Strategic Direction 8: Improve the organizational performance of the Authority

The purpose of this Strategic Direction is to enhance the performance of ISA within the context of the “evolutionary approach” provided for by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, taking into account the functional needs of the organs and subsidiary bodies concerned in order that they may discharge effectively their respective responsibilities at various stages of the development of activities in the Area. It is also emphasized in the 1994 Agreement that, in order to minimize costs to States parties, all organs and subsidiary bodies to be established under the Convention shall be cost-effective (1994 Agreement, annex, sect. 1 (2)).

PI 8.1 relates to the successful completion of outputs by the target date (**performance indicator 8.1**). At the time of writing this report, the figures for 2021-2023 were not ready. However, based on ratio available for 2019-2020, the general level of completion by organ is high (annex III).

PI 8.2 assesses the overall effectiveness of ISA in terms of the development and implementation of the necessary strategic frameworks to support the achievement of its mandate. It is evident that a coherent, well-structured, and integrated approach has been followed resulting in the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive framework which has enhanced the capacity of ISA to plan effectively and to mobilize its resources towards agreed objectives and identified priorities. This strategic framework includes the HLAP (ISBA/25/A/15), the Secretariat Business Plan (2021), the ISA MSR Action Plan (ISBA/26/A/4), and the Capacity Development Strategy (ISBA/27/A/5).

PI 8.3 and 8.4 monitor the financial health of ISA through measurement of the collection rate of assessed contributions. As of April 2023, the percentage of assessed contributions paid for each year from 2019-2022 was 88% (2019), 87% (2020), 90% (2021) and 91% (2022). However, prompt payment of contributions is essential for cash flow and to ensure continuity of operations. As of April 2023, only 68% of assessed contributions for 2023 had been paid (see **annex 1**). Arrears of contributions continue to be problematic, although the picture has improved recently, with 43 States having paid arrears of contributions in the past year (May 2022-April 2023) totaling \$1 million. As of May 2023, 48 members of ISA are in arrears of contributions for a period

³⁶ ISBA/24/A/10, para.22; UNCLOS, art.164(2)(b).

exceeding two years, amounting to USD 645,000. The Secretary-General continues to invest efforts to recover unpaid contributions, including by reaching out to regional groups and direct dialogue with the States Parties concerned. (PI **8.4**).

The share of extrabudgetary contributions to the budget as well as the number of new donors (PI **8.5**) is also an interesting indicator, as it reflects the support gained in favour of the mandate and work of the organization which is further reinforced with the development of a diverse donor based that reduces the risk of funding shortfall (PI 8.6). In this regard, during the period 2017–2022, extrabudgetary funding of \$2,203,688 was mobilized (from a base of zero in 2016). In real terms and as a percentage of the total budget of ISA (less than 5 per cent on an annual basis), this is rather low compared with other organizations, but a significant upwards trend has been observed since 2017.

PI 8.6 implicitly requires ISA to assess long-term options for funding its operations. This is important because, in accordance with UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, the administrative expenses of ISA are to be met by the assessed contributions of its members until ISA has sufficient funds from other sources (i.e., from activities in the Area) to meet those expenses. This provision also implies that the burden of financing ISA will progressively be shifted from member States onto future revenue from activities in the Area. In fact, since 2013, ISA has progressively introduced an element of cost-recovery into its financial management by requiring contractors to pay an annual fee to cover overhead costs for the administration of contracts for exploration. This fee was reviewed in 2017, 2020 and 2022 and currently stands at \$80,000. With a total of 31 contractors, it is estimated that overhead charges will produce \$5.1 million in revenue to the Authority in the financial period 2023–2024, which represents approximately 22 per cent of the approved budget. This has a significant impact on the assessed contributions to be paid by member States and is also fully consistent with the overriding principle that, eventually, the activities of ISA will be funded from revenue derived from activities in the Area.

To further address this performance indicator, the Secretary-General provided the Finance Committee in 2020 with a report on the future financing of ISA, including a forecast of future budgetary requirements, consistent with the evolutionary approach, indicating how ISA must evolve to effectively discharge its responsibilities at the various stages of development of activities in the Area. At the request of the FC, an updated version of that report, including projected budgetary requirements through to 2030, was prepared in 2023 (ISBA/28/FC/2).

Strategic Direction 9: Commit to transparency

Transparency is an essential element of good governance and therefore a fundamental guiding principle of ISA in the conduct of its activities. The measures taken by ISA since 2017 to ensure transparency have helped to consolidate the way the organization operates transparently.

Multiple events and initiatives are organized every year to increase outreach to the public and to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders of ISA's mandate and responsibilities as custodian of the Area and its resources (PI **9.1**). Between July 2022 and June 2023, 11 such events had already been organized for different audiences and constituencies reinforcing the dialogue and participation of all interested stakeholders in discussions pertaining to the mandate and work of ISA (see [annex 1](#)). During the same reporting period, 14 initiatives were carried out to receive stakeholder input (PI **9.2**). The number of official documents made available to the public through the website of ISA also marks high (PI **9.3**). All official documents of all organs and subsidiary bodies of ISA are publicly available through the website, which was reorganized and streamlined

for faster and more reliable access in 2022. In 2021, ISA also took the initiative to launch the ISA Web TV platform, providing live streaming of meetings of the Council and the Assembly.

Efforts have also been initiated to develop a communications and stakeholder engagement strategy, with a first draft released in 2021 (PI 9.4). This has been temporarily put on hold considering the ongoing discussions taking place in the Council in the context of the draft exploitation regulations. ISA also took several measures to increase public availability of non-confidential information contained in contracts and contractors' annual reports (PI 9.5) including making available summaries of contractors' plans of work and information on EIAs (see [annex 1](#)).

3.3 Main achievement and limitations from the perspective of stakeholders

This report provided an opportunity to engage in direct discussion with a range of stakeholders. A total of 21 interviews were conducted with 30 individuals representing different ISA stakeholders between April and July 2023.³⁷ with member States (6), contractors (4), observers (6) and international and regional organizations with which ISA is collaborating (3). Due to competing work priorities during the consultation period, some invited stakeholders declined to participate, some responded at the very last minute and some never responded (12) despite several follow ups and rescheduling of interviews. This section of the report presents the main conclusions from the stakeholder interviews, organized around six thematic areas.

A. Improved strategic planning enables better prioritization of activities and inclusive participation

The majority of stakeholders considered that the adoption of the Strategic Plan had allowed for identification of clear priorities and associated actions towards agreed outcomes. Several interviewees also stressed that a structured approach had been very useful in guiding the “evolutionary approach” particularly as ISA makes the transition towards the regulation and management of exploitation activities in the Area. The fact that the plan established a benchmark in terms of the work programme and activities implemented is also considered instrumental in allowing for inclusivity of all stakeholders, including non-members. One stakeholder underscored that the strategic plan had clarified the identification of the mandate and responsibilities assigned to ISA and its different organs and subsidiary bodies.

In their own words:

“Previously, ISA did not have a Strategic Plan, and the one that has been developed is the result of a very consultative process. This was important as ISA has been very proactive over the past 4-5 years in prioritizing the work it needs to do.”

“The first Strategic Plan has established a benchmark for the organization, which helps it to be inclusive and open to stakeholders and countries with different backgrounds and interests. The focus on capacity building, and progress in the process for the development of new regulations for seabed mining are clearly some of the areas of actions that benefited from it. Also, the fact

³⁷ [When the first version of this report was released in May 2023, 14 interviews had been conducted between April and May 2023 with member States \(3\), contractors \(2\), observers \(5\) and international and regional organizations with which ISA is collaborating \(3\).](#)

that the organization reported regularly on the progress and challenges faced reinforced the accountability perspective.”

“The Plan has been a wonderful outcome, in comparison with the first one. In the context in which there are many directions to go and limited resources, it has been really important to put actions in line with the big objectives. It’s wonderful to accomplish that”.

“As guardian of the common heritage of mankind, the Authority faces many challenges in playing its role in a changing world. It needs to strike an appropriate balance between multiple goals. In this context, a goal-oriented planning programme is of great importance to the Authority. We therefore believe that the Strategic Plan and the High-level Action Plan play an important role in promoting the Authority to discharge its responsibilities.”

“We think it made a substantive difference in the way the ISA and the Secretariat operate. We are pleased to see a continuation of that process, and it will bring a positive continuation to the ISA programmes”.

B. The need to consolidate fundamental functions of ISA as steward of the Area and its resources

The majority of stakeholders interviewed emphasized the fact that, through the implementation of the strategic plan, ISA is widely recognized for its potential to establish a model for the sustainable management of the global commons. Most stakeholders recognized that ISA has a very specific and complex mandate which plays a fundamental role in the overall ocean governance architecture set up by UNCLOS which contributes to the effectiveness of the rules-based legal order in the ocean. Many stakeholders interviewed, from different groups, noted that without ISA, the Area and its resources would probably have been already acquired without any consideration for the vision behind the legal regime for activities in the Area and the protection of the common heritage of humankind.

Some stakeholders therefore highlighted that the achievements made so far were “remarkable” in light of the magnitude of the responsibilities assigned and the very few resources allocated. One stakeholder noted that the complexity and challenging nature of the work of ISA was sometimes underestimated particularly in light of versatile positions adopted by some members which at times were in conflict with the overall objectives set out in UNCLOS and eventually resulted in undermining the work of the organization. Several interviewees were of the view that the adoption of the exploitation regulations would benefit greatly to better understanding by the general public of the mandate of ISA and the interlinkages with other agreements and global policy frameworks. Two interviewees were of the contrary opinion, and highlighted that decision making processes should be based on a precautionary approach based on best available science and guided by a comprehensive global research agenda to prioritize consensual scientific responses.

In their own words:

“The ISA shows how we must take into account the various interests, and how we must meet in the middle”.

“Compared with global governance in international fields such as Antarctica and outer space, the governance of the Area, with ISA at its core, has shown a tendency of rapid and healthy development. We appreciate the positive role played by ISA, especially its governance mechanism, its promotion of international law and its role in promoting sustainable development, which sets a good example for the sustainable management of other global commons.”

“In general, the implementation of UNCLOS and 1994 agreement the establishment of a unique governance architecture in which the area could be managed and its resources for the benefit of humankind is a valuable contribution to strengthening the law of the ocean. Without it the exploitation would already be happening in an unregulated way. So, it really benefits humankind as a whole. The regime for the area is really unique and ISA’s mandate can’t be compared to any other international organization, even if cooperation with other organizations should be necessary, we should keep in mind that this is a very particular regime.”

“Precautionary approach should guide the science to inform the work of the ISA. Life should be protected for life itself. ISA should offer scientific guarantees that seabed mining will not cause serious harm to the environment, and such parameters should also support more interaction between the BBNJ agreement and the work of the ISA.”

“ISA has been able to successfully manage the activities through the adoption and implementation of regulations. The lessons learned have enabled to develop practice and that is positive.”

“Under the management of ISA, the international seabed undertaking has made considerable progress, promoting cooperation amongst its member States in the exploration and research in the Area, enhancing the understanding and knowledge of all humankind, formulating the exploration regulations and progressing the exploitation regulations, providing useful reference for the establishment of rules, regulations and procedures for the management of the global commons, and contributing to the implementation of the principle of the “Common heritage of humankind” with at center, the protection of the environment”.

“ISA is not a suitable model for the management of global commons because it has conflicting mandates. The financial model in which it makes its income into contracts is inherently faulted. It is the worst possible way to administrate the global commons”.

“I am not sure ISA has ever intended to be a model beyond managing minerals. There have been problems in operationalizing the common heritage and the precautionary principle, as well as transparency in the work of the LTC, engaging the stakeholders and capacity development on resource extraction. Accordingly, It does not seem to be a useful model for the global commons”.

C. Main progress and future areas of improvements

Invited to identify the areas where ISA had made most of the progress in the last five years, stakeholders listed the following (by order of number of responses): (1) the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area, (2) capacity development and (3) strengthening the regulatory framework for activities in the Area. The work of ISA for (4) the protection of the environment, (5) improving transparency and the (6) realization of ISA’s role in global context were also noted.

In their own words:

“Encouraging and finding a collaborative way forward for marine scientific knowledge has been quite clear and has made a lot of progress.”

“ISA has implemented various initiatives, in particular to promote the development of scientifically robust and coherent methodologies to advance deep-sea biodiversity assessments, including a series of workshops and new initiatives to strengthen deep-sea biodiversity assessments. ISA has also developed DeepData, a deep seabed and ocean database, to facilitate the collection and dissemination of the results of the research and analysis conducted.”

“In order to achieve the goal of protecting the marine environment, ISA has established requirements for environmental baseline studies, environmental impact assessment and monitoring in its ongoing Exploitation Regulations. ISA is also continuously enhancing its environmental protection measures, such as by establishing REMPs in areas where exploration activities are carried out and by strengthening the monitoring to ensure that these are balanced with the social and economic objectives of sustainable development.”

“In addition to promoting the fulfillment of training obligations by contractors, ISA has taken a number of measures to effectively contribute to building the capacity of developing States. Examples include the establishment of the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area, the internship programme and the Secretary-General's Award for excellence in deep sea research. In addition, the establishment of regional and national training centres, such as the ISA-China Joint Training and Research Centre, are very efficient measures”.

“It is essential to enable science based decision making and in the revision of applications and EIAs. The common heritage principle should be given a broader voice towards society. ISA has not interacted extensively with the existing science networks and programmes, there are many which can be very relevant to legitimize, they only talk with scientists who work for contractors, while other scientists are not consulted. Advice is to try to engage much more closely with the scientists who are not working with the mining companies.”

“To do an effective job on sustainability there has to be clear overarching sustainable development goals. Overarching environmental principles that would guide the whole of activities. without these principles no one knows what they are evaluating.”

“The process of regulating exploitation is somehow controversial, but it is needed and it is important that ISA unfold the rationale to the public why it is important to maintain the integrity of the legal framework and why it is relevant for humankind.”

Several interviewees considered that more resources are needed to support the work that ISA has to do as a regulator and that a priority should be for members to ensure that ISA is prepared for rapid growth as it approaches the exploitation phase. Most of the stakeholders consulted also stressed that success would be dependent on the provision of the necessary resources and political support to ensure that the organization is able to fulfill its mandate.

The question of inclusiveness and consultation was also extensively discussed with stakeholders. The majority expressed the view that improvements have been made over the last five years.

Four raised a concern in relation to the meetings of the LTC and the need to have more transparency.

In their own words:

“The ISA needs to grow to be fit for purpose before exploitation starts, which requires more revenue which cannot be generated right now”.

“In terms of transparency, the Authority has developed a draft Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, conducted extensive stakeholder consultations in the development of Exploitation Regulations and accompanying standards and guidelines, the Authority’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan, and the development of the REMPs, and published non-confidential information contained in contractors’ contracts on the Authority’s website. The above-mentioned initiatives have greatly improved the transparency of the work of the Authority and yielded good results.”

“There have been a lot of improvements in engaging the stakeholders, with live sessions and a continuous increase of attendance. If we switch the attention from the loud minority in the newspaper articles to the silent majority, the majority will be positive about SG work in the ISA.”

“It would be very important to work on the inclusiveness in the LTC meeting, in which observers are not allowed. I don’t know of any other intergovernmental body in which such a substantive meeting, with 36 member states, in which observers are not allowed.”

“Deep data should be better structured to receive and share information, preparing for a scenario in which an enormous growth on data being produced will happen. There should be more proactivity on providing and sharing data.”

“Certain activities and meetings of technical commissions should be held in public, as part of the requirement for more transparency. There should be a provision that addresses coordination with other marine activities”.

“The biggest challenge is an external one, almost existential, the politicization of the issue of seabed mining. The alignment of some Member States with the radicalization of their positions against seabed mining and the legal framework in place represents a real risk if the positions that are a bit radicalized are pushed into the council, as this would create serious difficulties for the organization and for the effective implementation of UNCLOS.”

One area identified as having made the least progress related to the effective integration of developing States in the regime for the Area. More specifically, concerns were expressed about the operationalisation of the Enterprise, and the equitable sharing of benefits.

In their own words:

“ISA also needs to develop rules, regulations and procedures for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area. Similar rules, regulations and procedures must also be developed to allocate the payments made through ISA in respect of exploitation of non-living resources on the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, in accordance with Article 82, paragraph 4, of UNCLOS. In practice, however, the working process

for aforementioned activities is relatively slow. In order to achieve the goal of equitable sharing, ISA must strive to bridge the differences between the parties and expedite the development of relevant rules and regulations.”

Several stakeholders also raised the need to reinforce the ability of ISA to act for increased information of the public and the reduction of polarized discussion which for many interviewees does not reflect the real questions being discussed and which deserve better attention and constructive engagement.

D. Strategic partnerships

Most of the stakeholders interviewed noted the large increase of partnerships realized since 2019 and the positive results attached to those partnerships. Besides the existing cooperation between ISA and UN agencies, some stakeholders also expressed the views that furthering cooperation with academia could be very useful as well as with the private sector and civil society organizations. Above all, strategic partnerships with scientific-based organizations and those who are collaborating with the BBNJ process would be crucial to build the necessary public legitimacy that enables the regulatory framework to be consolidated.

E. Perspectives on mandate and work of ISA by 2030

Most stakeholders interviewed placed their response in a scenario where the exploitation regulations have been adopted, and exploitation activities have started, resulting in ISA acting as a full regulator with an increased role at a global scale. The majority of stakeholders identified that the success of this competence would be defined by ISA being able to balance various interests, effectively manage deep seabed mining and ensure the sustainable development of the resources of the Area, which in turn depends on ISA being provided with the necessary resources and political support. Some also underscored the fact that the contribution of ISA to the implementation of UNCLOS and the overall global ocean agendas is likely to increase, including in relation to ISA’s contribution to the objectives of the BBNJ Agreement.

IV. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2024-2028

Several well-noted global trends are likely to impact ISA and its work over the next five years. Whilst this report is not intended to provide a full evaluation of these trends and the magnitude of their impact, the following main trends have been extracted from literature and analyses that refer to ISA decisions and have been referenced also in the context of discussions with stakeholders.

The impact of these trends, individually and cumulatively, is difficult to predict and beyond the scope of the present report, but the point is that they should be taken into consideration when framing the next iteration of the strategic plan. Some trends, notably the need for stronger multilateralism and the development of new global biodiversity frameworks, increase the likelihood that ISA will be called upon to increase the range and scope of its activities.

Other trends, such as new developments in technology and artificial intelligence (AI), as well as the dire need for increased financial support to the implementation of SDG14, point to the need for increased levels of funding for marine scientific research programmes through ISA to tackle the global imperative for better scientific knowledge. Still others, such as the increased vulnerability of the developing countries and the urgent need for technology transfer, highlight the continued relevance of ISA's core mandate as an organization created for the purpose of promoting equity in access to resources and technology.

- **The need for stronger governance and multilateral cooperation for global commons.** Considering the current global shifts in politics, environment, and economics governments worldwide have been urging for stronger governance, cooperation, and multilateralism to address new global challenges and demands. The case of the management of the global commons is of particular importance. At the recent 75th anniversary commemoration of the United Nations, members adopted a declaration recognizing multilateralism as a crucial component for a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable world.³⁸ In this context, it is also widely recognized that the effective implementation of UNCLOS by States Parties in its entirety is essential to ensure peace, good order and sustainable management of the ocean and its resources and contribute to “the realization of a just and equitable international economic order which takes into account the interests and needs of mankind as whole and, in particular, the special interests and needs of developing countries, whether coastal or landlocked” (UNCLOS, Preamble).
- **Increasing demand for mineral supply:** The demand for minerals in the context of clean energy transition and climate change is a key driver of increased interest in the potential for marine minerals. To meet the demands for clean energy transitions and fulfill global climate goals, a significant increase in the supply of critical minerals is required. However, the current mineral supply and investment plans may fall short of the demands necessary for a timely and economically feasible transition, particularly considering the dynamics of population growth.³⁹ The mineral supply chain is also vulnerable to various issues, such as environmental and social performance, declining ore quality, long project development

³⁸ <https://www.un.org/pga/74/wp-content/uploads/sites/99/2020/07/UN75-FINAL-DRAFT-DECLARATION.pdf>

³⁹ Some projections estimate that by 2030, the global population will reach 8.5 billion, with 68% of this population (4.2 billion) expected to reside in urban areas and with a substantial increase in the middle class in developing countries. These trends will further pressure the demand for natural resources, including minerals, to deliver infrastructure, energy, and transport transitions to the growing population.

times, and climate risks. Most terrestrial critical mineral resources are prone to these challenges. To address these issues and strengthen the mineral supply necessary for clean energy transition, new and diversified sources of minerals will be essential. This includes scaling up recycling efforts and exploring alternative sources of minerals.

- **Ocean Pollution:** The issue of ocean pollution, which is already addressed in UNCLOS, has gained increased global attention, with demands for action to reduce plastic pollution. Governments and stakeholders at different international ocean conferences, including the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, have welcomed these discussions. The Lisbon Declaration,⁴⁰ which emerged from the conference, also highlighted other types of marine pollution, such as nutrient pollution, waste discharges, and underwater noise, as key challenges in achieving SDG 14. The declaration emphasized the vital role of international cooperation based on science, technology, and innovation in overcoming these challenges.⁴¹
- **New Global Biodiversity Frameworks.** Global efforts to address biodiversity loss have accelerated through the establishment of new international frameworks. In March 2023, the international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) was finalized, supporting and adding to the existing legal framework for global ocean governance reflected in UNCLOS. With almost 30 years of experience as the regulator of the common heritage of humankind, ISA is well-equipped to help achieve the objectives of the BBNJ Agreement. In December 2022, the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes 23 ambitious targets to protect and promote sustainable use of biodiversity. These efforts are in line with other emerging global agendas and commitments.
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urges us to find a harmonious balance between socio-economic needs and environmental concerns to achieve global prosperity. The Blue Economy is a crucial catalyst for realizing this goal. The ocean already contributes \$1.5 trillion annually to the global economy, and this figure could climb to \$3 trillion by 2030.⁴² The economic value of goods and services from the deep sea in areas beyond national jurisdiction is estimated to be \$267 billion per year.⁴³
- **Increased vulnerability and limitations of developing countries:** Developing countries face significant challenges in bridging the gap between socio-economic and environmental objectives due to their limited resources and capacity. This leaves them vulnerable to global changes and shocks, making it even more challenging for them to contribute to global efforts. To address this, emerging global agendas, frameworks, and declarations emphasize the importance of capacity-building for developing countries, ensuring that no one is left behind. The Doha Programme of Action adopted by LDC-5 in March 2023 calls for enhanced participation and representation of developing countries in

⁴⁰ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UNOC_political_declaration_final.pdf

⁴¹ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UNOC_political_declaration_final.pdf

⁴² <https://www.oecd.org/environment/the-ocean-economy-in-2030-9789264251724-en.htm>

⁴³ EU 2022 blue economy report

global decision-making.⁴⁴ With an estimated population increase of 256 million between 2020 and 2030, the population in the LDCs is expected to reach 1.3 billion.⁴⁵ It's worth noting that over 3 billion people rely on the ocean for their livelihoods, with the vast majority of them residing in developing countries.⁴⁶

- **Technology transfer:** The importance of technology transfer has been widely acknowledged in various international agendas for developing countries. From the Doha Programme of Action for the LDCs to the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the Samoa Pathway for the SIDS, this is a top priority. In fact, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* recognizes the need to expand the African knowledge society through investments in science, innovation, and technology as a key strategy for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Additionally, the *African Blue Economy Strategy (2019)* highlights the critical role of education and research in the development of Africa's blue economy. It also acknowledges the growing demand for knowledge and expertise, particularly in the exploitation of deep-seabed mineral resources.⁴⁷
- **An underfunded Ocean.** The Ocean is in dire need of funding. Even though over USD \$222 billion⁴⁸ has been allocated to SDG funding since 2016, SDG 14 has received only approximately USD \$1.24 billion, making it the second least-funded goal. At the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, in the Lisbon Declaration,⁴⁹ world leaders emphasized the importance of increasing ocean actions and reaffirmed their commitment to improving the health, productivity, sustainable use, and resilience of the ocean. They also pledged to explore, develop, and promote innovative financing solutions to facilitate the transition to sustainable ocean-based economies.
- **New technologies and artificial intelligence:** The rapid pace of development and integration of new technologies and AI is likely to bring significant benefits to the work of the ISA, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of the ocean economy. This is especially the case in areas such as data analysis, monitoring, and as a support for decision-making. For instance, AI can be used to analyze vast amounts of exploration data, enabling the ISA to identify potential risks and opportunities more quickly and effectively, reducing time and cost while minimizing environmental impact. Additionally, the use of more advanced autonomous underwater vehicles can aid in the exploration and mapping of the seabed, providing valuable information for decision-making.

⁴⁴ Doha Programme of Action <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/308/25/PDF/N2230825.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/sustainable-ocean-for-all_bede6513-en

⁴⁷ African Blue Economy Strategy (2019)

⁴⁸ <https://sdgfunders.org/sdgs/>

⁴⁹ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UNOC_political_declaration_final.pdf

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above analysis and the feedback from stakeholders several conclusions can be drawn which could be of importance to ISA members in framing the next iteration of the strategic plan.

The first key finding of this report is that much of the context and many of the challenges identified in the first strategic plan remain equally relevant today. These contextual challenges reflected the changes that have occurred since the entry into force of UNCLOS almost 30 years ago and that have accompanied the evolution of ISA since 1994. It is likely that some of these challenges will be exacerbated by the global trends noted in Part IV of this report. Of particular concern is a noticeable trend towards increased inequality and marginalization of developing countries, particularly LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. This makes ISA's role even more important, considering that UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement contain specific provisions aimed at increasing the capacity of developing countries and prioritizing their participation in global ocean governance. Considering also the reaffirmation at global level of the importance of multilateralism and global governance, it can be observed that ISA is already playing a central role in global ocean governance. With the recent conclusion of the BBNJ Agreement it is likely that ISA's mandate and activities will become more and more essential to the effective co-management of ocean space and natural resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction for the benefit of all. The issue of transfer of technology is likely to assume considerable importance in this regard.

A second key finding of this report is that the implementation of the first strategic plan of ISA contributed in a material way to reinforce the delivery of the unique and broad mandate and functions assigned to ISA by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement, particularly at a time when the organization is transitioning from managing deep sea exploration to regulating future exploitation of seabed minerals in the Area. The fact that the strategic plan also served as the basis for a comprehensive strategic framework is overwhelmingly a positive development and could be regarded as a watershed in the history of the organization.

A third key finding is that, while UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement establish clear legal parameters for the initial stages of ISA's development, they also highlight the need for ISA and its organs and subsidiary bodies to evolve over time with a view to effectively implementing its responsibilities, particularly in relation to the organization and control of exploitation activities and the redistribution of benefits to all humanity (often referred to as 'the evolutionary approach'). In this regard, it is crucial that ISA gains effectiveness over time in its capacity to integrate its two main roles as steward of seabed and regulator of exploitation activities.

The latter two key findings result in a fourth key finding, which is a reinforcement of the critical need for continuity so that ISA can further consolidate the progress that has been made to date, whilst at the same time keeping the necessary flexibility to ensure that ISA can continue to respond, with the support of its members and broader range of stakeholders, to the priorities identified by UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement. This is a reaffirmation of the evolutionary approach, which invites ISA to expand the level of transparency into a prospective stand in the public realm, enabling the global community to really understand the benefits of exploitation.

The fifth key finding is that it is remarkable that ISA has been able to make so much progress with such limited financial and human resources and despite global impacts due to COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the lack of financial support to ISA does not come as a surprise, considering the general lack of funding to support SDG14, members of ISA should continue to review whether

the resources from their financial contributions will be sufficient to enable ISA to fulfill the potential of the mandate it has been given and make a full contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

The final (sixth) key finding is that new technology and new scientific knowledge, combined with the action-oriented strategic framework that has been developed by ISA members over the past five years, presents an 'ocean of opportunity' to generate scientific knowledge of the ocean, to develop the resources of the Area for the benefit of humankind in a way that is just, fair and equitable to present and future generations, and to achieve one of the ultimate goals of UNCLOS, which is a 'just and equitable international economic order which takes into account the interests of [humanity] as a whole, and in particular, the special interests and needs of developing countries, whether coastal or landlocked'. ISA is a unique organization, which has been described as 'a unique experiment in international relations' and it is critical, both for the continued success of UNCLOS as a package, as well as for the success of multilateralism, that ISA continues to effectively implement its mandate. It is crucial that the scientific data that references ISA next choices on regulation are strongly legitimized within the global scientific community.

* **Annex I: Stakeholders interviewed.**

ENTITY	NAME
Chair Legal and Technical Commission	Mr Erasmo Lara Cabrera (Mexico)
Chair Finance Committee	Mr (Former Chair) Andrzej Przybycin (Poland)
Member States	
Argentina	Mr Federico Gabriel Hirsch Mrs Lucía Scheinkman Mr Facundo Santiago
Canada	Mr Patrice Laquerre
China	Mrs Wenting Zhao
Norway	Mr Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik
Poland	Mr Bartosz Jasinski Mr Piotr Nowak Mrs Paula Wołkowycka Mrs Agata Kozłowska
Russia	Mr Oleg Zhegl Mr Livia Ermakova
Contractors	
COMRA (China)	Mr. Changbin Wu - Secretary-General Mr WU Guifeng
GSR (Belgium)	Mr Van Nijen Kris Mrs Samantha Smith
IFREMER	Mr Sebastien Ybert
NORI	Mr Corey MacLachlan
Observers - NGOs	
Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea	Ms. Youna Lyons
Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI)	Mrs Lisa Levin
International Cable Protection Committee	Mr Ryan Wopschall Mr Kent Brassie
International Ocean Institute	Dr Awni Behnam
PEW	Mr Julian Jackson
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary	Mr. Mark Reymann
World Organization of Dredging Associations	Mr Tom Matthewson
UN entities – implementing partners	
Secretariat CBD	Mr Joseph Appiott
Secretariat of Pacific Community	Mr Akuila Tawake
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Mr Sai Navoti

* More delegations had been approached to contribute their perspectives but eventually, 12 of them were not able to meet with the Consultant including three (3) delegations that never responded to the invitation (including 1 member State, 1 intergovernmental organization and 1 non-governmental organization), and two (2) declined (member States).

Annex II: Overview of achievements against key performance indicators for the period 2019-2023

List of performance indicators for each strategic direction	2019	2023
Strategic direction 1: realize the role of the Authority in a global context		
1.1 Number of programmes and initiatives overseen by the Authority that contribute to the achievement of relevant goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	4 (Voluntary Commitments 1, 2, 5, 6 registered at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference)	13 (8 Voluntary Commitments registered at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference; REMPS; ISA-China JTRC; DeepData; Women in the Law of the Sea; AREA2030)
1.2 Number of strategic alliances and partnerships established with regional and global organizations to improve cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources	7 (AALCO; IHO; IOC-UNESCO; IMO; OSPAR; SPC; WMU)	20 (+ IORA; Sargasso Sea Commission; African Union; Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity ; Workshops with DOALOS For the World Ocean Assessment II ; IOC/OBIS ; MABIK; National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt ; National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research of NZ ; World Register of Ocean Species ; UNTBLDC ; National Maritime Foundation – India ; Research and Information Services for Developing Countries – India)
1.3 Number of States that have ratified or acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea	168 Members (167 States + EU)	169 Members (167 States + EU)
1.4 Number of States that have ratified the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982	150	153
1.5 Number of States parties that have ratified the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority	47	48
1.6 Number of member states of the Authority that have deposited charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points that establish the limits of national jurisdictions, including the delimitation of the continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines of the territorial sea, with the Secretary-General	10	12

Strategic direction 2: strengthen the regulatory framework for activities in the Area		
2.1 Adoption of rules, regulations, and procedures for the conduct of activities in the Area and progress towards the adoption of the associated standards and guidelines necessary for their effective implementation	3 sets of exploration regulations & 5 recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States	3 sets of exploration regulations & 5 recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States + draft exploitation regulations and 10 phase 1 standards and guidelines
2.2 Number of sponsoring States that have enacted deep seabed related laws, that govern and administer contractors' activities in the Area	33	38
2.3 Number of technical and targeted workshops, including virtual workshops held through online collaborative tools, convened to support member states in the implementation of the legal regime governing deep seabed activities in the Area	6 (Pretoria ws S&G; ADSR project (Pretoria Ws); Abyssal Initiative project (Tonga, Nauru, Kiribati); Myanmar Ws)	7 ADSR (Mauritius, Abuja ws); Abyssal Initiative project (Cook Islands, Tonga); Indonesia (x 2); Philippines (national consultations workshop)
2.4 Number of programmes and initiatives of the Authority that contribute to addressing the specific challenges faced by developing States in implementing effectively relevant international legal instruments governing activities in the Area	2 (ADSR project, Abyssal Initiative project)	11 (+ Capacity development workshop; consultation with Members for assessment of national priorities; technical assistance programme for LDCs, LLDCS and SIDS; partnership with IORA and UNTBLDC; DeepDiploma Sea)
Strategic direction 3: protect the marine environment		
3.1 Development, implementation and review of rules, regulations and procedures based on the best available science, the precautionary approach, and best environmental practices for the environmental responsible management of activities in the Area	5 sets of recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States	5 sets of recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States + draft exploitation regulations and 10 phase 1 standards and guidelines
3.2 Number of regional environmental management plans adopted and implemented	1 (EMP CCZ)	1 (EMP CCZ) And 3 more in development
3.3 Number of areas of particular environmental interests established after being identified on the basis of the best available scientific information	9	13 (EMP CCZ)

3.4 Availability of environmental information to the public	All environmental data collected by contractors through DeepData	All environmental data collected by contractors through DeepData
Strategic direction 4: promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area		
4.1 Number of strategic alliances and partnerships that contribute to the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area	4 (DOOS; EU/Atlantic REMP Project; CSIRO/Australia; Natural History Museum)	19 (DOOS; CSIRO/Australia; National Oceanography Center of UK; Natural History Museum of UK; OBIS/IOC; IHO; IORA; African Union; Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity; World Register of Ocean Species; National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research of NZ; MABIK; NIOF Egypt; SMARTX Project; DEEP-REST Project; UNTBLDC; National Research Council – Italy; TRIDENT project; JPI Oceans Mining Impact)
4.2 Number of research results and analyses, including from contractors, disseminated through the Authority's database	n/a (Analysis for CCZ REMP workshop, including using the data from DeepData Analysis for Northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge REMP workshop, including using the data from DeepData)	n/a (Assessment of data quality of oceanographic data in Indian Ocean and North West Pacific; Regional environmental assessment of the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge (TS 28); Potential interactions between fishing and mineral resource-related activities in ABNJ)
4.3 Number of strategic alliances and partnerships that contribute to enhancing and expanding the sharing of data and information	1 (OBIS/IOC for sharing biodiversity data)	5 (OBIS; DOOS; IODE; WORMS; IHO; DOALOS; FAO; ILO)
4.4 Promote marine scientific research directed towards providing the scientific knowledge necessary to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment	(DeepData public launch; Biosynthesis ws; Evora Ws; Kiribati ws)	5 workshops with DOALOS in support of the regular process (x2); SSKI workshop (x1); Technology workshop with NOC (x1); REMP workshop Chennai)
Strategic direction 5: build capacity for developing States		
5.1 Identification of specific capacity-building needs of developing States by developing States	0	6 (Consultation with Members for assessment of national priorities; establishment of National Focal Points for Capacity Development; IORA; UNTBLDC; ADSR project; Abyssal Initiative Project)

5.2 Number of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing States who have participated in the capacity-building programmes of the Authority	272 (CTP – 47; IP – 5; Abyssal initiative – 150; ADSR project: 70)	91 (CTP – 26; ISA IP – 1; ADSR project:5; IFREMER post-doc; NOC internships (x2); Abuja workshop (40); Tonga workshop (15); SG Award)
5.3 Percentage of capacity-building activities with long term impact for the receiving member States	n/a	n/a
5.4 Number of female qualified personnel from developing States who have participated in the capacity-building programmes of the Authority	98 (CTP – 24; IP – 4; EFMSR: 5. Abyssal initiative: 40; ADSR project: 25)	45 (As of May 2023) (CTP – 17; IP – 1; ADSR project - 2) IFREMER post-doc; NOC internships (x2); Abuja workshop (15); Tonga workshop (8); SG Award)
5.5 Number of qualified personnel who have benefited from training funded through the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area	14	0 (EFMSR on hold due to COVID-19 and superseded by ISA Partnership Fund)
5.6 Number of members of the Authority that have contributed to the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area	2	5 (Mexico, China – EFMSR // Mexico, France, Greece under the ISAPF)
5.7 Number of non-members of the Authority that have contributed to the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area	0	0
Strategic direction 6: ensure fully integrated participation by developing States		
6.1 Number and percentage of developing states members of the Authority attending the meetings of the Authority (by meetings), including landlocked and disadvantaged States, small islands States and least developed States	Assembly: 41% (14,5% - LDCs; 4% - LLDCs; 20% SIDS)	Assembly: 46 (44.5% of the ISA developing States members) (26% -LDCs; 13% - LLDCs; 30%- SIDS) (Data for 2022)
	Council: 25% (5,5% - LDCs; 5.5% LLDCs; 14% SIDS)	Council: 24 (96% of the developing countries elected to the Council), (16% - LDCs; 8,3% LLDCs; 25% SIDS) (Data for 2022)

6.2 Number of members of the Finance Committee and the Legal and technical Commission from developing States who have benefited from the Voluntary trust fund	26	14 (As of May 2023) (From 2019 to 2013: 58)
6.3 Number of members of the Council from developing States who have benefited from the Voluntary trust fund	10	5 (As of May 2023) (From 2019 to 2013: 29)
6.4 number of total contributions made to the voluntary trust funds (by fund)	VTF (LTC & FC) è \$52,510 VTF (Council)è \$7,502 VTF (Enterprise)è\$27,316	VTF(LTC&FC)è \$28,000 VTF(Council)è \$8,500 VTF(Enterprise)è\$7,500
6.5 Identification of possible approaches to the independent operation of the Enterprise, including procedures and criteria for the establishment of joint ventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise Study completed. • Appointment of SR for the Enterprise. • Establishment of the VTF for the SR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTC made recommendations in respect of the Enterprise Study. • SR contract was renewed.
Strategic direction 7: ensure equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits		
7.1 Adoption of a mechanism for providing for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits	0	0
Strategic direction 8: improve the organizational performance of the Authority		
8.1 Number of outputs completed by the original target date	(See Annex II)	(see Annex II)
8.2 Adoption and implementation of the strategic plan, the high-level action plan and other relevant workplans necessary for the achievement of the Authority's mandate	2 (SP & HLAP)	6 (SP; HLAP; Secretariat Business Plan; ISA MSR Action Plan in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science; Capacity Development Strategy)
8.3 Percentage of assessed contributions received from members (collection rate)	78%	68% (As of May 2023)

8.4 Percentage of unpaid contributions by members	22%	32% (As of May 2023)
8.5 Percentage of extrabudgetary contributions to the budget, as well as number of new donors	3 % with 6 new Donors	7% with 4 new Donors
8.6 Percentage of contributions provided by top-five donors	Japan 13.029 China 10.661 Germany 8.599 France 6.540 United Kingdom 6.007	China 20.337 Japan 10.710 Germany 8.147 United Kingdom 5.833 France 5.756
Strategic direction 9: Commit to transparency		
9.1 Number of outreach activities undertaken by the Authority to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders if its mandate and responsibilities for the Area	9 (World Ocean Day; Pretoria Ws; Myanmar Ws; High-Level meeting UN Global Compact; High-Level Meeting on Ocean & Climate; 2 nd WMU regional conference for the Americas; III rd IORA Ministerial Blue Economy conference; World Federation of Science Journalist; 6 th Our Ocean Conference)	11 (World Ocean Day; Deep DiplomaSea; ISA MSR Web Series for Africa; UN Ocean Conference; HLPF; ADSR project (Mauritius and Abuja Ws); Abyssal Initiative (Cook Islands, Tonga ws); IGF information workshops (2))
9.2 Number of initiatives launched by the Authority to receive stakeholders' inputs	2 (Consultation on draft HLAP; consultation on draft regulations)	14 (Ongoing intersessional work (2 webinars, 8 March and 30 May 2023); 10 draft standards and guidelines made available for stakeholder consultation during 27 th session; stakeholder consultation on the draft standardized approach for the development, implementation and review of REMPs (January 2023); consultation on the draft strategic plan for 2024-2028)
9.3 Number of official documents made available to the public through the website of the Authority	594 (25 th session) July 2019)	756 (27 th session July 2022)

	Organ	# of Documents	Organ	# of Documents
	Assembly (31x6) Council (49x6) LTC (12x6) FC (7x6)	186 294 72 42	Assembly (36X6) Council (74x6) LTC (8x6) FC (8x6)	216 444 48 48
9.4 Adoption and implementation of a communications and stakeholder engagement strategy	n/a	1 draft submitted and on hold pending progress of discussions by the Council		
9.5 Measures taken by the Authority to make publicly available the non-confidential information contained in contracts and contractors' annual reports, when allowed by national legislation, and related environmental information, including the impact assessments associated with applications of plan of work	3 EIA/EISs in the context of exploration activities from 3 contractors made publicly available.	Information on 26 contracts made publicly available. 1 EIA/EIS in the context of exploration activities from 1 contractor made publicly available.		

Annex III: overview of outputs completed by initial target date by ISA organs

SD	Assembly		Council		Secretariat		LTC		FC	
	2019-2020	2021-2023	2019-2020	2021-2023	2019-2020	2021-2023	2019-2020	2021-2023	2019-2020	2021-2023
SD1	100.0		50.0		100.0		100.0		N/A	
SD2	100.0		89.0		83.0		50.0		100.0	
SD3	67.0		47.0		46.0		47.0		N/A	
SD4	0		0		25.0		N/A		N/A	
SD5	50.0		0		62.5		20.0		N/A	
SD6	71.0		50.0		78.5		75.0		N/A	
SD7	0		N/A		100.0		N/A		50.0	
SD8	83.0		86.0		72.0		100.0		91.0	
SD9	50		86.0		86.0		100.0		N/A	
	* <u>ISBA/26/A/9</u>		* <u>ISBA/26/A/8</u> * <u>ISBA/26/C/23</u>		* <u>ISBA/26/A/2</u>		* <u>ISBA/26/C/12/Add.1</u>		* <u>ISBA/26/A/10</u> * <u>ISBA/26/C/21</u>	

