

**Statement of the Republic of Sierra Leone on Agenda Item 8  
on the Report of the Secretary-General of the International  
Seabed Authority under Article 166, Paragraph 4, of the  
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

**Assembly of the International Seabed Authority**

**26<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Mr. President,**

1. The delegation of aligns this statement with the statement delivered by the Distinguished Representative of Republic of Ghana, on behalf of the African Group, and we offer this further elaboration in our national capacity.
2. In this statement we will highlight **four points**.
3. As a prologue, allow me to express on behalf of the delegation of Sierra Leone our deep appreciation to the host State, Jamaica, for the kind hospitality extended to our delegation and the Government's commitment to the International Seabed Authority ("ISA" or "Authority").

4. As with the African Group, we commend the Government of Jamaica for the improvement of the Jamaica Conference Centre, which enables and facilitates the richness of our engagements.

**Mr. President,**

5. The delegation of Sierra Leone is immensely proud of your election as President of the Assembly of the ISA, the supreme/political organ in the Authority, and we accordingly extend our warmest congratulations to you, and the other members of the Bureau of the 28<sup>th</sup> session on your respective elections. With the demonstration of your astute leadership and that of the Bureau already, be assured of this delegation's fullest support, as a friend of the President.

6. Our **first point** relates to your election, **Mr. President**, and I am pleased to convey that your election has been well received by the Government of Sierra Leone, and the Presidency of Sierra Leone has acknowledged the direct nexus to **His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio's**

commitment to strengthen our engagement with the Authority, including through the appointment of a Permanent Representative, and to foster and harness marine scientific research and knowledge, capacity development, to deliver on our Government's priority on "Technology and Infrastructure Pathways for Sustainable Economic Growth", and to also achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 14.

7. On the **second point**, Sierra Leone thanks the **Secretary-General** of the **ISA**, **H.E. Mr. Michael Lodge**, for his annual report contained in document **ISBA/28/A/2** and the illustrative version appropriately titled "Just and Equitable Management of the Common Heritage of Humankind".
8. The reports submitted to the Assembly under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("UNCLOS" or "Convention"), when read together, provide comprehensive information on the activities of the Authority within its mandate during the reporting period. Accordingly, the commendable work of the organs of the Authority, in particular, the Secretary-

General and the dedicated and committed Staff of Secretariat, is well appreciated by the delegation of Sierra Leone.

9. We also thank the **Secretary-General** for introducing the report, and in doing so, for expressing the kind sentiments on the occasion of the 'Africa Day of Seas and Oceans' on the 25th of July. The day is aimed at raising "awareness about challenges facing African Seas and Oceans as well as highlight the 2050 African Integrated Maritime (AIM) Strategy and Africa's blue economy".
10. Sierra Leone notes with appreciation the important steps taken by the Secretary-General to advance the important principles of representation and universality in the work of the Authority, keeping with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement as they relate to the mandate of the Authority and the Common Heritage of Humankind principle.
11. In this regard, we welcome the initiatives to enhance the capacity of developing States as outlined in the capacity development strategy; working through National Focal

Points for effective coordination with member States; the Deep Dive and other learning platforms made available to developing States; and the Africa Deep Seabed mining project (ADSR). We applaud the active promotion of gender balance and women leadership in the work of the Authority and in marine scientific research.

12. The delegation of Sierra Leone, however, takes this opportunity to further reinforces the statement of the African Group on our concern in relation to the continuing under-representation of the African Group at various levels of the Secretariat, particularly at the senior management level. We strongly support the call for appropriate steps to be taken by the Secretary-General to ensure the representativeness of the Secretariat.

13. Finally on our second point, the delegation of Sierra Leone congratulates the **Republic of Rwanda** on its ratification of the Convention and ipso facto becoming a member of the ISA. Sierra Leone warmly welcomes 'the land of a thousand hills and mountains', a landlock country, to the UNCLOS family, further affirming the

universal nature of the Convention and the 1994 Implementing Agreement.

14. On the **third point**, the delegation of Sierra Leone congratulates the Intergovernmental Conference on the adoption of the international legally binding instrument under the UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Sierra Leone welcomes the important role the BBNJ Agreement will play, upon its entry into force, as a global and holistic framework for adopting conservation measures and ensuring equity in the sustainable use of ocean resources of areas beyond national jurisdiction ("ABNJ").
  
15. Much like the African Group in the BBNJ negotiations, the delegation of Sierra Leone aspired for and worked towards concluding the third UNCLOS implementing agreement that would allow those with limited activities in the high seas to commit to the main objective of conservation and sustainable use with the urgency to address the marine biodiversity crisis, and to secure ocean

sustainability for present and future generations, consistent with Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Common Heritage of Humankind principle.

16. The BBNJ Agreement applies to areas beyond national jurisdiction, which means the high seas and the International Seabed Area. Given the general objective of the BBNJ Agreement and the mandate of the ISA, a level of coordination is indispensable and anticipated in the interaction between the BBNJ Agreement and Part XI of UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement.

17. The delegation of Sierra Leone in this regard would reiterate the importance of good faith in the implementation of article 5 paragraph 2 of the BBNJ Agreement which provides that the *“Agreement shall be interpreted and applied in a manner that does not undermine relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies and that promotes coherence and coordination with those instruments, frameworks and bodies”*.

18. Also, Sierra Leone recalls the significant progress made in the BBNJ Agreement on benefit sharing, both monetary and non-monetary benefits, notwithstanding the difference of views on the governing principles that applies to the geographical scope of the BBNJ Agreement. Therefore, in the ISA context, much like the African Group, we are of the firm view that the UNCLOS envisages that the benefits from deep-sea bed mining in the Area should accrue to all humankind, and the benefit sharing mechanism should therefore be designed to take into account the administrative costs of the ISA, payment of compensation to land-based mining countries and a significant surplus for equitable distribution.
19. Sierra Leone in this regard is not in a position to support any proposal which is at variance with the UNCLOS and the 1994 Implementing Agreement, more particularly proposals, which would unnecessarily diminish the financial benefits that would be available for sharing and that would undermine equitable distribution.



**Mr. President,**

20. On our **fourth point**, we wish to dovetail the African Group and other delegations in commending the work of the Council of the ISA in its commitment to develop or elaborate regulations for the exploitation of deep-sea resources in the Area, in spite of its inability to do so at the expiration of the deadline of the two-year on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

21. Significantly, the adoption of the decision of the Council relating to the understanding and application of section 1, paragraph 15, of the Annex to the Agreement Implementing Part XI of UNCLOS demonstrates Council's commitment and unity in reiterating that commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area should not be carried out in the absence of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation, and reaffirming its commitment to the adoption of the said rules, regulations and procedures in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement in a timely manner.

22. The delegation of Sierra Leone, in view of the commitment of the Council, notes the several outstanding issues to be resolved, and the priorities of the African Group as outlined in the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group by the delegation of Ghana. In this regard my delegation acknowledges the significant step taken in the budgetary allocation and the establishment of the position of the Interim Director-General by Council, as part of the step-by-step approach to the operationalize the Enterprise.

23. Let me close, **Mr. President**, by congratulating **Ms. Rima Browne** of the **Cook Islands** for receiving the 2023 Secretary-General Award for Excellence in deep-sea research, and in doing so, to also recognize the important objective of the award, to promote and encourage young researchers from developing States to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge of the deep-sea environment, and in the development of environmentally sustainable regulatory frameworks, embodying the very spirit of the Common Heritable of Humankind principle. **I thank you.**