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Statement by the President on the work of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority at its twenty-eighth session

1. The twenty-eighth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston from 24 to 28 July 2023. A total of 10 meetings were held (197th to 206th meetings).

I. Adoption of the agenda

2. At its 197th meeting, on 24 July, the Assembly considered the provisional agenda¹ and the supplementary list of agenda items for its twenty-eighth session. On 28 July, during its 206th meeting, the Assembly adopted the agenda.²

3. The Assembly did not adopt the proposals contained in the supplementary list of agenda items. However, with respect to the proposal submitted by Germany to include an additional item relating to the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Assembly decided, at its 206th meeting, to include the item on the agenda of its twenty-ninth session in 2024.³ In the same decision, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include the aforementioned agenda item when drawing up the provisional agenda pursuant to rule 10 (c) of the rules of procedure, and requested the Finance Committee to consider the budgetary implications of the proposal and to report to the Assembly during the twenty-ninth session.

4. With respect to the joint proposal submitted by Chile, Costa Rica, France, Palau and Vanuatu to include an item on the establishment of a general policy by the Assembly related to the conservation of the marine environment, including in consideration of the effects of the “two-year rule”, some delegations raised the issue of the incompatibility of that proposal with the Convention, the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 (1994 Agreement) and the rules of procedure of the Assembly, leading the Assembly to agree that it would be open to the submission of

¹ ISBA/28/A/L.1.

² ISBA/28/A/1.

³ See ISBA/28/A/16.



a request by the proponents, pursuant to rule 10 (e) of the rules of procedure, to include an item in the provisional agenda of the twenty-ninth session of the Assembly in 2024 entitled “A general policy of the Authority for the protection and preservation of the marine environment”.

5. Several delegations noted that the adoption of the provisional agenda and the consideration of whether to adopt items contained in a supplementary list were separate matters and that the Assembly, at the current session and in future meetings, should proceed to adopt its provisional agenda separately from items contained in a supplementary list of agenda items, pursuant to its rules of procedure and following established practice in other intergovernmental forums.

II. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly

6. At the 197th meeting, following the nomination of African States to preside over the Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations, Alhaji Fanday Turay, was elected President of the Assembly for its twenty-eighth session.

7. The representatives of Belgium (Western European and Other States), Singapore (Asia-Pacific States) and Trinidad and Tobago (Latin American and Caribbean States) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Assembly for the twenty-eighth session.

III. Appointment and report of the Credentials Committee

8. At its 197th meeting, the Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee, consisting of the following members: China, Dominican Republic, Germany, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Zimbabwe.

9. The Credentials Committee met on 26 July and elected Clemens Wackernagel (Germany) as its Chair. The Committee examined the credentials of representatives participating in the twenty-eighth session.

10. At the 203rd meeting, on 27 July, the Chair of the Credentials Committee presented the report of the Committee,⁴ which was approved by the Assembly at the same meeting.⁵

IV. Requests for observer status in the Assembly

11. At the 197th meeting, in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly and the guidelines for observer status of non-governmental organizations with the Authority,⁶ the Assembly considered and approved eight applications for observer status from the following applicants: China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation,⁷ Te Ipukarea Society,⁸ Norwegian Forum for Marine Minerals,⁹ Arayara International Institute,¹⁰

⁴ ISBA/28/A/10.

⁵ See ISBA/28/A/17.

⁶ ISBA/25/A/16, annex.

⁷ See ISBA/28/A/INF/1.

⁸ See ISBA/28/A/INF/2.

⁹ See ISBA/28/A/INF/3.

¹⁰ See ISBA/28/A/INF/4.

Minderoo Foundation,¹¹ Sustainable Ocean Alliance,¹² International Council on Mining and Metals¹³ and Environmental Justice Foundation Charitable Trust.¹⁴

V. Election to fill a vacancy on the Finance Committee

12. At the 197th meeting of the Assembly, in accordance with section 9, paragraph 5, of the annex to the 1994 Agreement, Xing Chaohong (China) was elected to fill the vacant seat on the Committee left by Kejun Fan for the remainder of his term, ending on 31 December 2027.¹⁵

VI. Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research

13. During the 198th meeting of the Assembly, on 24 July, the Secretary-General presented the fourth edition of his Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research to Rima Browne (Cook Islands), a geographer for the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority, for her contribution to mapping the seabed. The Secretary-General expressed his appreciation to the Government of Monaco for its continuing contribution in support of the Award since its inception.

14. The delegation of Monaco congratulated Ms. Browne and reiterated the continued commitment of Monaco to the initiative, as well as to the promotion and encouragement of scientific research in the Area in support of the protection and preservation of the marine environment, placing emphasis on the advancement of women. The Prime Minister of the Cook Islands also expressed appreciation for the recognition of the efforts undertaken by Ms. Browne and the Cook Islands in adding to scientific knowledge of the seabed. Several other delegations congratulated Ms. Browne on receiving the award.

VII. Annual report of the Secretary-General

15. At the 199th meeting of the Assembly, the Secretary-General presented his annual report, submitted in accordance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention, comprising an official document¹⁶ and an illustrated publication entitled *Just and Equitable Management of the Common Heritage of Humankind*.¹⁷ Under the same agenda item, the Secretary-General also reported on the implementation of the action plan of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.¹⁸ The Secretary-General opened his presentation by adding his voice to the commemoration of the African Day of Seas and Oceans, celebrated every year on 25 July, and commending the African States members of the Authority for their ongoing efforts to develop the necessary regulatory frameworks and institutions to fulfil the vision of the Convention in ensuring the sustainable management and protection of the ocean and its resources.

¹¹ See [ISBA/28/A/INF/5](#).

¹² See [ISBA/28/A/INF/6](#).

¹³ See [ISBA/28/A/INF/7](#).

¹⁴ See [ISBA/28/A/INF/9](#).

¹⁵ See [ISBA/28/A/9](#).

¹⁶ [ISBA/28/A/2](#).

¹⁷ Available at www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ISA_Secretary_General_Annual_Report_2023.pdf.

¹⁸ [ISBA/28/A/8](#).

16. During the 199th, 200th, 201st and 202nd meetings, on 25 and 26 July 2023, the Assembly conducted a general debate on the reports of the Secretary-General. One regional group, 53 members of the Authority and 10 observers made statements, in addition to one joint statement by Pacific Island States.¹⁹ Statements were also made by Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives, namely: the President of Nauru, Russ Joseph Kun; the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Mark Brown; the State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Alando Terrelonge; and the Secretary of State for the Sea of France, Hervé Berville.

17. Delegations thanked the Government of Jamaica for its hospitality and commitment to the continued work of the Authority. They also thanked the Secretary-General, the Council of the International Seabed Authority, the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee and the facilitators of the informal working groups of the Council, as well as the staff of the secretariat for their hard work during the year.

18. The majority of delegations commended the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report he had submitted and noted with appreciation the illustrated publication, noting that it provided a very dynamic and detailed overview of the work carried out by the Authority, in particular, the extensive efforts of the secretariat in implementing a wide range of activities to further the mandate of the Authority, as well as the strategic directions and associated outputs outlined in the strategic plan and the high-level action plan of the Authority for 2019–2023.

19. The majority of delegations further noted with appreciation the extensive work carried out under all nine strategic directions set out in the strategic plan and high-level action plan of the Authority for 2019–2023 to deliver on the high-level actions and related outputs assigned for the reporting period. Several delegations specifically noted that those achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the staff of the secretariat.

20. Most delegations welcomed the increase in membership of the Authority with the accession of Rwanda to the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, and expressed their strong commitment to the integrity of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement as the legal and normative basis for all activities carried out in the Area. Many delegations further stressed that the recommitments echoed by Member States, during the high-level commemoration organized by the General Assembly in December 2022 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the Convention, highlighted its continuing relevance in ensuring the effective and sustainable administration of the Area and its resources as the common heritage of humankind, with due regard to the protection of the marine environment.

21. Delegations noted the significant progress achieved by the Council in the development of the draft regulations on exploitation and welcomed the new road map for the remaining part of the twenty-eighth session and the first and second parts of the twenty-ninth session, with a view to the adoption during the thirtieth session of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation.²⁰ Delegations also welcomed the goal of having a consolidated draft text of the regulations for a holistic review of the harmonized text after the third part of the twenty-eighth session of the Council. Notwithstanding the efforts to implement a road map, some delegations cautioned against the establishment of stringent timelines for the completion of the work remaining, stressing that the Authority should not be bound by a deadline if all

¹⁹ Delivered by the Cook Islands on behalf of the Cook Islands, Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu.

²⁰ See [ISBA/28/C/24](#).

the elements necessary to establish a robust legal framework were not in place. Several delegations highlighted that contracts for exploitation should not be granted until a consensus on the legal regime had been reached, while most delegations underscored that strong and robust exploitation regulations were the best way to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment. Delegations also expressed support for the ongoing work by contractors in exploration and research to promote and gather more environmental data to safeguard the fragile ecosystem in the oceans.

22. Most delegations highlighted the contribution of the Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that it had already contributed to 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, to Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. Delegations further welcomed the support of the Authority for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, as well as the active participation and representation of the Authority in the process leading to the adoption of an internationally legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions. In that regard, many delegations welcomed the fact that the new international instrument recognized the stewardship of the Authority of the Area and its resources, while further reinforcing its unique mandate for the governance of the ocean.

23. Many delegations acknowledged with appreciation the Authority's contribution to other global and regional processes, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as the continued productive and positive cooperation with United Nations agencies and organizations. Several delegations welcomed the approval by the Council of the agreement of cooperation between the International Labour Organization and the Authority,²¹ with a view to ensuring the highest international standards on human health and safety and conditions of work on-board vessels used for activities in the Area, as required under article 146 of the Convention.

24. Several delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring that the legal mandate assigned to different organizations responsible for the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment was respected pursuant to the specific responsibilities recognized by the Convention, the 1994 Agreement and specific regional treaties in order to avoid overlap and enhance coordination among them. Recalling the exclusive responsibility recognized in the Convention and the 1994 Agreement of the Authority to regulate and organize activities in the Area, including in relation to the protection of the environment from potential harmful effects that might arise from such activities, and noting the recent adoption of a decision by the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic to extend the scope of the North Atlantic current and Evlanov Sea basin marine protected area by including the Area, some delegations expressed concerns about the potential overlap of such a decision with the mandate of the Authority, as well as in relation to the consultation process followed, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for the Council at its twenty-ninth session, detailing the communication that took place in that regard between the secretariat of the Authority and the OSPAR Commission regarding the decision, assessing the potential impact of the decision on the Authority's mandate, and providing recommendations on how to prevent interference with the Authority's mandate while enhancing cooperation and consultation with other relevant organizations. Delegations also noted that Japan would be hosting a workshop on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Area in the North-West Pacific Ocean in February 2024, in Tokyo.

²¹ See [ISBA/28/C/16](#).

25. The majority of delegations welcomed the decision of the Council on the establishment of the post of Interim Director General of the Enterprise.²² Several delegations shared the view that given the current advanced stage in the development of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area by the Council, the operationalization of the Enterprise was an integral part of the necessary evolution of the legal regime of the Area, pursuant to article 153, paragraph 2 (a), and article 170 of the Convention, as well as section 2 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. Many delegations highlighted the importance of making progress on the operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission.

26. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the continued contributions from member States and stakeholders to the voluntary trust funds, highlighting the important role they played in ensuring the full participation and representation of developing States in the meetings of the Authority. Delegations also called upon member States in arrears with their assessed contributions to pay those arrears as soon as possible and urged the Secretary-General to continue to engage actively with such member States.

27. Delegations welcomed the establishment of the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund and underlined the importance of the objectives of the Fund to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research for the benefit of humankind as a whole and to develop the capacities of developing States members of the Authority, in particular, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Delegations noted that the establishment of the Fund was a crucial step towards achieving the shared goals of the Authority and encouraged other member States, observers and other stakeholders to donate to the Fund.

28. Many delegations commended the work and efforts invested by the Authority in enhancing the capacity of developing States in line with the key result areas set out in the capacity development strategy adopted in 2022. Many noted that between July 2022 and June 2023 more than 380 individuals had benefited from at least one capacity-building or capacity-development activity implemented by the Authority. Delegations expressed appreciation for the number of trainees in the contractor training programme (68 over the reporting period and more than 350 during the lifetime of the programme).

29. Several delegations noted the positive approach taken by the Authority of working through national focal points, with a view to ensuring effective coordination with member States and enhancing the level of applicants, and that, as of June 2023, 59 member States had nominated a national focal point. Several delegations welcomed the upcoming launch of the alumni network of former trainees to serve as a pool of knowledge for developing States. Many delegations welcomed the ongoing organization of expert webinars such as the “Deep DiplomaSea” series for diplomats and senior representatives of United Nations entities, as well as the recent launch of “Deep Dive”, the e-learning platform of the Authority, as a new mechanism to build and develop the capacities of developing States.

30. Several delegations noted with appreciation specific projects implemented to address the specific needs identified by developing States and members of the Authority, in particular, the Africa Deep Seabed Resources project jointly implemented by the African Union and the Authority, with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, through which the latest workshop had been held in Abuja in October 2022; and the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth implemented jointly by the Authority and the Department of Economic and Social

²² ISBA/28/C/23.

Affairs, with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. Some delegations specifically expressed appreciation for the outcomes of the workshop held in Tonga in June 2022, aimed at discussing the elements pertaining to the equitable sharing of benefits from activities carried out in the Area.

31. Other delegations also welcomed the progress made by the International Seabed Authority-China Joint Training and Research Centre and the collaborative programmes launched, respectively, with the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Technology Bank for the Least Developing Countries.

32. Many delegations commended the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to advancing women's empowerment and leadership in ocean affairs, including in deep-sea research and through the Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women established in June 2022 through the International Gender Champions network. Many delegations further acknowledged the first conference on "Women in the Law of the Sea", organized in September 2022 in New York with the support of the Permanent Missions of Malta and Singapore to the United Nations, for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Several delegations also expressed appreciation for the success of the measures taken to promote gender parity among secretariat staff, including in senior professional roles, and the institution of family-friendly policies.

33. Many delegations specifically underscored the significant progress and outcomes of the Women in Deep-Sea Research project as a vital initiative to address the underrepresentation of women in deep-sea science and related disciplines. Many delegations acknowledged the launch, on World Oceans Day (8 June 2023), of "See Her Exceed", the first-ever global mentoring programme aimed at women scientists from developing States and, in particular, those from least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Several delegations also noted with interest that, during the reporting period, more contractors had pledged to allocate 50 per cent of their training opportunities to suitably qualified female applicants under the Women in Deep-Sea Research project.

34. Many delegations welcomed the increase in collaboration and strategic partnerships established between the Authority and national, regional and international organizations, noting with appreciation the increased number of partnerships established with research organizations in developing States. Several delegations recognized with appreciation the cooperative arrangement between the Authority and the International Hydrographic Organization through the AREA2030 initiative launched in 2022, noting the significant contribution made to the global efforts undertaken by the Nippon Foundation-General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans Seabed 2030 project. Delegations urged the Authority to further promote and encourage the advancement of marine scientific research in the Area and the transfer of technology to support equal and effective participation in the activities of the Authority by developing States in all regions, noting with appreciation initiatives and projects such as the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative and the TRIDENT project to develop a technology-based impact assessment tool for sustainable, transparent deep-sea mining exploration and exploitation.

35. Several delegations expressed satisfaction with the approach followed by the Authority, which was operating in an inclusive and transparent manner. Many delegations commended the work of the secretariat in advancing the deep-sea literacy of the general public on the legal regime of the Area and the work of the Authority, noting the quality of the publications and research papers produced by the secretariat to support the critical discussions conducted by different organs of the Authority, and invited the Secretary-General and the secretariat to continue their efforts in that respect.

36. While some delegations further noted with appreciation reforms undertaken over the years to equip the secretariat with the necessary resources to ensure that it was fit for purpose, Ghana, on behalf of the Group of African States, as well as other delegations from African member States, highlighted the importance of ensuring better geographical representation of African experts in the secretariat, in particular at the senior management level.

37. During the 206th meeting of the Assembly, several delegations made statements of a general nature. Several delegations expressed their national positions on deep seabed mining and the need to ensure robust regulatory frameworks for the protection of the marine environment, prior to the approval of a plan of work for exploitation. The delegation of France highlighted that the world was faced with the collapse of marine biodiversity, rising sea levels and an increase in ocean temperature caused by the effects of climate change, the results of which would mostly affect countries with low-lying and fragile coasts and island nations. Upon that premise, it called for members of the Authority to support a total ban on exploitation activities and prioritize the development of a robust framework for the effective protection of the marine environment, while undertaking scientific research to better understand the impacts of human activities on the seabed.

VIII. Statement by the President of the Council on the work of the Council at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions

38. The President of the Council, Juan José González Mijares (Mexico), gave an oral report on the work of the Council during the first part of the twenty-eighth session, which was held from 16 to 31 March 2023,²³ and the second part, held from 10 to 21 July 2023.²⁴ The Assembly took note of the report of the Council on the third part of the twenty-seventh session, held from 31 October to 11 November 2022.²⁵

39. Delegations welcomed the various outcomes reached by the Council during its meetings, including the significant progress made in the development of the draft regulations on exploitation of minerals in the Area; decisions adopted with respect to the establishment of the position of an interim director general;²⁶ and two decisions relating to the timeline and understanding of the application of the two-year period, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 15, of the annex to the 1994 Agreement.²⁷

IX. Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee

40. At its 198th meeting, on 24 July 2023, the Assembly considered the report of the Finance Committee.²⁸ Delegations took note of the status of the various funds and commended member States and other stakeholders for donations made to the respective funds.

41. Delegations welcomed the work undertaken by the Committee in its assessment of the justifications provided by the Secretary-General on the proposed costs and budgetary impacts of the operationalization of the Enterprise, as well as the forecasted budgetary requirements associated with the anticipated work of the Authority for the

²³ ISBA/28/C/11.

²⁴ ISBA/28/C/11/Add.1.

²⁵ ISBA/27/C/21/Add.2.

²⁶ ISBA/28/C/10, ISBA/28/C/21 and ISBA/28/C/23.

²⁷ ISBA/28/C/24 and ISBA/28/C/25.

²⁸ ISBA/28/A/4-ISBA/28/C/13.

period 2025–2030,²⁹ in conformity with the evolutionary approach contained in the 1994 Agreement.³⁰

42. With respect to the development of rules, regulations and procedures on the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area, some delegations expressed or reiterated their preference for the establishment of a common heritage fund (formerly a seabed sustainability fund) over a mechanism that would favour direct distribution, while others suggested that both options should be considered. Some delegations also welcomed the proposed objectives and scope of the common heritage fund contained in the annex to the report of the Finance Committee, suggesting also that the scope of the fund should not be restricted to activities in the Area, and that the proceeds could be channelled towards addressing issues related to other global commons, such as climate change, or addressing global environmental issues such as marine plastic pollution. One delegation noted that that the objective of capacity development should not diminish the obligation of contractors in that respect.

X. Consideration and adoption of a supplementary budget for the financial period 2023–2024

43. At its 198th meeting, taking into account the recommendations of the Council and the Finance Committee,³¹ the Assembly adopted a decision on financial and budgetary matters, including the adoption of a supplementary budget relating to the costs associated with the establishment of the position of Interim Director General for the Enterprise.³²

XI. Consideration of the draft strategic plan of the Authority for the five-year period 2024–2028

44. At the 203rd and 206th meetings of the Assembly, the Secretary-General presented his reports on the implementation of the strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023³³ and on the proposed draft strategic plan for the period 2024–2028.³⁴ The Secretary-General recalled that pursuant to the decision of the Assembly providing for a regular review of the strategic plan and monitoring of its impact, the secretariat had commissioned an independent assessment of the implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2019–2023, published on 25 May 2023.³⁵ The analysis carried out by the consultant had been based on several reports prepared by the Authority since 2019 to keep members and observers informed of the status of the implementation of the strategic plan³⁶ and the findings of the independent report commissioned by the Secretary-General in 2021 to assess the contribution of the Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the action plan of the Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of

²⁹ ISBA/28/FC/2.

³⁰ See 1994 Agreement, annex, sect. 1, para. 3.

³¹ See ISBA/28/C/21, ISBA/28/A/3-ISBA/28/C/12 and ISBA/28/A/3/Add.1-ISBA/28/C/12/Add.1.

³² ISBA/28/A/15.

³³ See ISBA/28/A/11.

³⁴ See ISBA/28/A/7.

³⁵ Available at www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Review-of-implementation-of-ISA-SP-2019-2023-Final.pdf.

³⁶ See the annual reports of the Secretary-General under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in particular those for 2020 (ISBA/26/A/2), 2021 (ISBA/26/A/2/Add.1), 2022 (ISBA/27/A/2 and ISBA/27/A/2/Add.1) and 2023 (ISBA/28/A/2); see also ISBA/26/A/9, ISBA/26/A/10-ISBA/26/C/21, ISBA/26/A/34 and ISBA/26/C/12/Add.1.

Ocean Science for Sustainable Development³⁷ and the capacity-development strategy of the Authority.³⁸

45. The secretariat launched an open consultation for all stakeholders on the draft strategic plan for 2024–2028 during the period from 26 May to 26 June 2023, inviting submissions and comments. A total of 18 submissions were received. The majority of submissions came from members of the Authority (10),³⁹ followed by contractors (6).⁴⁰ Two submissions were made by observers.⁴¹ A second consultation was launched from 26 June to 25 July 2023.

46. Several delegations noted that the strategic plan and high-level action plan for 2019–2023 had significantly contributed to advancing the implementation of the mandate of the Authority while ensuring coordination among the different organs.

47. Several delegations welcomed the draft strategic plan, noting that it provided continuity in the work of the Authority at a time when important developments were taking place in relation to the legal regime of the Area and the implementation of the evolutionary approach. It was noted that the Authority was still engaged in the preparatory phase of its mandate, based on the provisions of the 1994 Agreement, that is, the phase involving the development of the draft regulations on exploitation and the period before the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation.

48. Taking into account the concerns of some delegations as to the short period of time allowed for consultation on the draft strategic plan, including the need to ensure stability in the work of the Authority, the Assembly decided, at its 206th meeting, to extend the current strategic plan (for the period 2019–2023) by two years and requested the Secretary-General to review the high-level action plan for 2019–2023 with a view to extending it in line with the extension of the strategic plan.⁴²

XII. Fostering international and regional cooperation in support of the stewardship of the Area

49. At its 202nd meeting, the Assembly took note of and approved the signing by the Secretary-General, on behalf of the Authority, of two memorandums of understanding. The first memorandum of understanding was between the Authority and the International Relations Institute of Cameroon with a view to formalizing their cooperation in order to design and implement a dedicated capacity development programme to address the specific needs of member States in the region and establish a dedicated curriculum on part XI of the Convention for African diplomats, to support the development of enhanced knowledge and expertise in African countries, including by developing a series of activities for the dissemination of knowledge and expertise on the law of the sea and in relation to matters pertaining to the implementation of part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement in Africa.⁴³ The second memorandum of understanding was between the Authority and the National Institute

³⁷ See [ISBA/26/A/17](#).

³⁸ See [ISBA/27/A/5](#) and [ISBA/27/A/11](#).

³⁹ Canada, Ecuador, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Nauru, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation and Senegal.

⁴⁰ China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association, Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. and Tonga Offshore Mining Limited.

⁴¹ Deep Sea Conservation Coalition and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

⁴² See [ISBA/28/A/16](#).

⁴³ See [ISBA/28/A/12](#).

of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt for the establishment of a joint regional training and research centre.⁴⁴

50. The delegation of Ghana, on behalf of the Group of African States, introduced both memorandums of understanding, noting that both initiatives would support the fulfilment of the Authority's responsibilities and obligations in relation to capacity-building, as well as technical and international cooperation for the development of knowledge and expertise through the active participation and involvement of relevant regional and national institutions, in line with the strategic directions identified in the Authority's strategic plan for the period 2019–2023 and its revised version, and the capacity development strategy.

XIII. Report on proposed amendments to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission

51. At its 197th meeting, the Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed amendments to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission⁴⁵ and adopted a decision in which it approved the amendments and requested the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority to notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the acceptance by the Authority of the proposed amendments to the statute.⁴⁶

XIV. Dates of the next session of the Assembly

52. The twenty-ninth session of the Assembly will be held in Kingston from 29 July to 2 August 2024. It will be the turn of Eastern European States to nominate a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly.

⁴⁴ See [ISBA/28/A/13](#).

⁴⁵ See [ISBA/28/A/5-ISBA/28/C/14](#).

⁴⁶ See [ISBA/28/A/14](#).