

Trinidad and Tobago notes with deep concern the activities/incidents that occurred in November/December 2023 in the Area and implications for further activity in the future.

My delegation appreciates all the efforts by all parties, including the Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority, to attempt to mitigate and resolve the situation as quickly as possible. Thankfully, there have been no reports of injury to persons and/or damage to equipment nor the marine environment.

However, in the aftermath there are many questions which my delegation wishes to raise here and Mr. President, we humbly seek your guidance as to precisely where these questions should be directed. For example, Mr. President, even among the immediate measures, the Court decisions and other responses to the incidents – there are questions as to WHO has jurisdiction over WHAT. So question 1, could be, what is the boundary of the Authority’s jurisdiction in relation to, say, that of the International Maritime Organization?

Which would then raise another question; should the Secretary General and the Authority be seeking to enhance the MOU with the IMO as we, the Authority, pursue our work in drafting Rules and Regulations and Standards and Guidelines?

Furthermore, Mr. President, our Question 3 would centre on the issue of Compliance and Enforcement – issues with which the Council are seized but which may not yet sufficiently encompass such incidents. Should we continue to expect the LTC to coordinate this or should we be looking to another entity who may already have the wherewithal to address these matters more effectively? [IMO; ITLOS?].

Mr. President, my delegations list of questions continues as it is almost inexhaustible, but I will refrain from adding more today – and until at least we have an indication that we are asking right questions in the right place.

Let me assure you, Mr. President, that my delegation fully upholds the rights of any entity to PROTEST. Mr. President, throughout the deliberations and negotiations of the Council all of us continually refer to what we consider a guiding principle of UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement by which we adhere to the fact that we are protecting the Area and its resources which “are the common heritage of humankind” – we must, therefore, observe this through our responsible actions. We also recognize the sovereignty of all States and respect the legitimacy of contracts approved by this Council.

My Delegation stands ready to collaborate constructively as we join with all States, including, small island developing States (SIDs), and the voices of indigenous peoples, as we continue to contribute to the continuing work of the Council.

Thank you, Mr. President.