

29th Session of the International Seabed Authority

Agenda Item 8

National Statement of Antigua and Barbuda by H.E. Ambassador Dwight C.R. Gardiner OBE, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the ISA

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen greetings to all. Mr. President as this is the first time that Antigua & Barbuda has taken the floor at this meeting, I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your leadership of this 29th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority. I also extend our appreciation to our Caribbean Colleague, Jamaica for their unfailing hospitality as host country of the Authority.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary General for his very comprehensive and informative report on the progress of the organization over the last year. We express our appreciation for the substantial and considerable progress that is underway especially with regard to the implementation of the 2019-2025 Strategic Plan. My delegation supports the continued momentum we have made towards fulfilling the goals of the Authority. It is only through our joint support that we can continue to move forward together.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to highlight the excellent work being done by the Secretariat in executing the workplan of the Authority. The workload expected of the Secretariat has expanded in recent years and despite the limited

budget and human resources they have gone above and beyond in their professionalism and dedication to our shared goals. As the workload and demands of, we the Member States on the Secretariat expands, we must reevaluate whether the current budget allocation is suitable for the efficient operation of the Authority.

Mr President, my delegation would also like to thank the Member States for their contributions to the ISA Partnership Fund, which has allowed the Authority to increase its outreach and partnerships with research institutions in developing countries. One of the projects approved by the Fund this year is a regional workshop to be held in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) at the University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus in Antigua, later this year.

The workshop will be the first needs assessment for the Caribbean regarding marine scientific research in the Area and will include lectures on the legal regime governing the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and data collection and management, with a specific focus on the case of SIDS and the equitable sharing of non-monetary benefits from activities in the Area.

The Fund is a crucial step towards achieving the shared goals of this body and we encourage other Member States that are able, to reach out to the Secretariat and discuss donations to the Fund, and for developing States to also utilize this opportunity to participate in or host activities within the scope of the capacity development strategy.

Mr. President, Antigua and Barbuda welcomes the operationalization of the Enterprise and is particularly proud that a Caribbean national was selected to be the Interim Director General. We look forward to the future development and activities of the Enterprise under his leadership.

Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight for the Authority a historic decision concerning UNCLOS and States' obligation therein on behalf of the Commission of Small Island States (COSIS). The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) has delivered an Advisory Opinion in May 2024, requested by the Commission, confirming that State Parties to UNCLOS have specific obligations to prevent, reduce, and control marine environmental pollution arising from climate change, as well as to protect and preserve the marine environment in the face of climate change impacts.

This landmark advisory opinion holds profound implications for the future of international environmental law and climate governance, impacting the most developed and the least developed states. We are at a novel juncture in the development of international law and climate litigation before international courts and tribunals.

Mr. President, as always, significant work remains to be done in advancing to the ultimate goals of the Authority and Antigua & Barbuda would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our full support to the work of the Authority and we will continue our contribution to that work.

Thank you, Mr. President.