

Statement of the United States
International Seabed Authority Assembly 29th Session July 2024

Thank you, President. The United States pledges its support for you and the Bureau in leading us through the Assembly's work this week. We wish to thank the host government, Jamaica, for its customary warm hospitality.

We thank the Secretary-General, and the hard-working staff of the Secretariat, for their achievements during the past year. We welcome the annual report of the Secretary-General which provides a comprehensive review of the work of the Authority. The report provides an opportunity for this delegation to comment on the prospect of exploitation activities in the Area and the Authority's current work.

President, the United States strongly supports robust and effective protection of the marine environment. The United States also recognizes the need for responsible development of critical minerals, regardless of origin, and improvements in the efficient use and recycling of these minerals to support the clean energy transition and for key economic and national security sectors.

The United States is supportive of research for the benefit of responsible management, including for informed decision-making on whether or how to proceed with seabed minerals resource development.

As an observer to the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the United States believes that before approving any mining activities, the ISA must put in place a regulatory framework, based on a robust scientific understanding of the impacts of seabed mining, that ensures effective protection for the marine environment.

The United States fully expects the development and implementation of such a framework to include meaningful stakeholder engagement; adaptive management based on new information, science, and knowledge; effective monitoring; and transparency throughout the process, including in the ISA's management of contractor activities.

President, regarding the Council's consideration of the roadmap for 2025, we remain keenly sensitive to concerns regarding the potential for adverse effects associated with seabed mineral activities. The United States believes that the ISA should remain focused on developing a regulatory framework that will ensure effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects of seabed mining activities in the Area.

Consistent with the United States' longstanding support for a precautionary approach to the use of the marine environment, and regulations that reflect that approach, the United States believes effective protection of the environment requires a robust understanding of the marine environment and the potential impacts of seabed mining activities on the ocean, impacted

species and ecological communities, and the climate to inform an adaptive regulatory framework that supports sound risk assessment and management that can respond to evolving scientific understanding, new information, and knowledge, including from monitoring and evaluation results. Any seabed mining activities, including exploration activities, should contribute to a deeper understanding of the marine environment, potential impact-producing factors, and risk assessment, through transparency, collaboration, and data sharing.

Finally, President, a comment on the meaning of “provisional approval” in the Annex to the 1994 Agreement if an application for a plan of work for exploitation is submitted before the Mining Code is completed. As we noted during the Council’s 28th session last year, the United States does not believe that the Annex text regarding provisional approval of an application means that permission to begin mining must be granted. We continue to believe that absent a regulatory framework as provided in the Convention to ensure effective protection of the marine environment, Article 145 would be an impediment to the commencement of mining activities.

President, as the Authority rightly commemorates its 30 years of work to develop the legal framework for the Area. The United States looks forward to continuing to contribute to the success of the ISA as it begins its next decade of work.

Thank you, President.