

Response of Madam Secretary General to the concerns raised by some member States in relation to paragraph 14 of the LTC Chair's report (ISBA/30/4/Add.1)

Mr President, I would like to respond to the questions raised by some member States in relation to paragraph 14 of the Legal and Technical Commission Chair's report (ISBA/30/4/Add.1)

Capacity development has been an integral component of the work of the International Seabed Authority (the Authority) since its inception. These efforts are fundamental to the work of the Authority as enshrined in its rules, regulations and procedures. Let me also take the opportunity to say that the success of the Authority's training programmes is also of great significance to me, personally, as I myself am a product of such training.

As Member States are aware, the Contractors' Training Programme is the Authority's flagship capacity building initiative which was designed under UNCLOS for the benefit of developing States members of the Authority. In accordance with the Recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States relating to training programmes under plans of work for exploration (ISBA/19/LTC/14/Rev.1), training programmes shall focus on training in the conduct of exploration and shall provide for full participation by such personnel in all activities covered by the contract. Such training programmes may be revised and developed from time to time as necessary by mutual agreement.

Since 1994, more than 1,000 individuals have received training through ISA-supported programmes, projects and initiatives. By the end of 2025, we anticipate that over 350 individuals will have benefited from a practical training programme per the schedule drawn up by respective contractors in cooperation with the Authority and the sponsoring State. This includes 115 women and over 100

participants from least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States.

However, it is not merely the number of trainees that distinguishes our efforts. It is also the unique nature of the opportunities drawn up by respective contractors in cooperation with the Authority and the sponsoring State. The contractor training programmes, supported by the Authority, focus on the conduct of exploration, and provide for full participation by personnel of the Authority and developing States in all activities covered by a contract, including at-sea training and access to advanced laboratories.

Guided by lessons learned over the past three decades, we are broadening the focus on strengthening the capacity of national institutions as delineated in the ISA Capacity Development Strategy. We want to ensure that the capacity development efforts of the Authority create a multiplier effect that not only increases individual expertise but also enhances the long-term capabilities of institutions in developing countries.

But we want to do more, do it better, and properly. Let me emphasize here that one of my top priorities as ISA Secretary-General, and as a former oceanographer, with many years of experience on vessels, is to ensure that any training, and particularly at-sea, is safe for women. And I intend to initiate consultations with young scientists to develop a protocol that will support safe and productive on-board engagement between scientists, both male and female.

Mr President, When I commenced my tenure in January 2025, I reviewed the Contractors' Training Programme including the Deep Dive and National Expert Deployment programmes. This is part of the broader review of the operations and strategic direction of the Secretariat.

After careful assessment, I made the decision to place the implementation of the Contractors Training programme through Deep Dive and National Expert Deployment programmes under review because, in my interpretation, some

contractors were essentially paying the Secretariat to conduct training in order to fulfil their obligations under the contract to provide training to nationals from developing countries, which I do not believe is appropriate. Secretariat initiatives cannot be used to fulfil these obligations. Rather, contractors should develop their own programmes in a meaningful and tailored way.

Subsequently, all Contractors were informed of this decision, and the relevant four Contractors were requested to revise and submit their training schedule to the Secretariat.

I wish to highlight that the Secretariat has been actively engaged in negotiations with the four Contractors that were affected by this decision to find other options for fulfilling their training obligations.

The Secretariat had successfully renegotiated the affected training placements for three Contractors before the first part of the 30th Session of the Council. The Secretariat has generally agreed with one remaining Contractor on change of their training programme and working on the details, which should be finalised in the coming weeks.

Mr. President, I am pleased to inform the Council that the Deep Dive e-learning platform has been ongoing beyond the Contractors' Training Programme, **open and free to candidates from developing member States**. Between the period from January to June 2025, a total of 85 candidates from developing Countries have participated in and benefited from the Deep Dive e-learning platform, while 72 candidates benefited during the period from January to June 2024. The next cohort will be in September 2025 and the call for applications was open last week. However, please note that Deep Dive will not revert to being an option under Contractors' Training Programme.

As for the National Expert Deployment programme, it is the same as the Deep Dive e-learning platform, it will not revert to being an option under Contractors'

Training Programme. But it is still open to the projects under the Partnership Fund or funded by member States.

In closing, I wish to recall to developing member States present today that the Contractors' Training Programme was designed with your needs in mind, that is, to strengthen your research capabilities, train your personnel in the technique and applications of research and foster the employment of your qualified personnel in research in the Area pursuant to article 143(3)(b) of the Convention. I therefore urge you to continue taking ownership of the programme and the wider capacity building initiatives by making your needs known through your appointed national focal points on capacity building as well as by nominating suitably qualified candidates with particular focus on nominating more women to ensure that the gender and geographic representations become more balanced.

I thank you Mr President.