



GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU

International Seabed Authority

[21 – 25 July 2025 in Jamaica]

Agenda Item 8: Annual Report of the Secretary General

24 July 2025

Tuvalu's intervention

To be delivered by

Head of Delegation

Mr. Talavai Iona

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Tuvalu congratulates you, Mr. President, and you madam Secretary General on your appointments. And we thank our gracious host, Jamaica, for the warm hospitality.

Thank you, Secretary General, for your insightful Annual Report.

We also congratulate the ISA on reaching its 30th anniversary. Scientists tell us that 30 is when the human brain is fully developed, a time when responsibility, purpose, and obligation converge. And following yesterday's commemorations, this moment should also mark a phase of deeper maturity and sharper focus for the ISA, and an opportunity to check and reset bearings for this modern world.

In light of that, we note that over the last 30 years, only one of the 5 mandatory periodic reviews has been conducted. Needless to say, a comprehensive review is overdue; not only to assess what has been achieved, but to diligently examine the effectiveness of the current governance model. This is a fundamental matter of accountability and not just a procedural issue.

Mr. President,

As a large ocean state, Tuvalu's identity is inseparable from the ocean. Our culture, our livelihoods, and our very survival are bound to the life and health of the marine environment. Our fisheries are an important economic resource, and also the backbone of food security and cultural continuity. In this regard, we are deeply concerned about how potential deep-sea mining activities, especially those that are transboundary in nature, could affect our blue economy. Tuvalu supports the growing consensus for the need for independent scientific work in this space.

Positioned on the front lines of the climate crisis, Tuvalu has consistently demonstrated strong leadership in advancing environmental protection. In collaboration with fellow COSIS members, Tuvalu played a pivotal role in obtaining the landmark 2024 ITLOS advisory opinion, which affirmed that an effective regulatory framework depends on having sufficient, up-to-date scientific information about the marine environment.

In that spirit, Tuvalu supports the development of a general policy on marine environment protection, and it should not delay progress on regulations. This approach places environmental integrity at the core of decision-making.

Yesterday's commemoration coincided with the historic unanimous ICJ advisory opinion, clearly stating that climate change is an urgent and existential threat to human life and natural ecosystems, and that climate action to combat it is a matter of legal duty for high-emitting states under international law. More importantly for this Assembly,

state parties to the UNCLOS have an obligation to adopt measures to protect and preserve the marine environment, including from the adverse effects of climate change and to co-operate in good faith.

Mr. President,

We reaffirm our support for the precautionary pause in deep-sea mining. Despite growing scientific insight, the deep sea remains largely unknown, yet scientists know it plays a vital role in the functioning of the planet. It is also known, as we heard yesterday from the Deep Sea Dialogues report back, that mining threatens unique ecosystems where fauna depend on mineral-rich habitats, with some impacts likely to be permanent and irreversible. And here, my delegation warmly welcomes the Deep Sea Dialogues, and looks forward to its future iterations.

But a precautionary pause should not mean inaction. Work on the Mining Code and scientific research must advance. And no mining should proceed without robust scientific data to ensure effective environmental protection.

We commend the Council for its diligent work, and for doing most of the heavy lift. However, mechanisms must be established to ensure that non-Council members are adequately informed and meaningfully engaged. And that includes allowing the Assembly to exercise its oversight role with greater effectiveness.

Finally, it is our view that the ISA faces an inherent conflict of interest: it regulates deep-sea mining while also safeguarding the marine environment. And tying ISA revenue to mining through the benefit-sharing model may skew priorities toward exploitation over protection. To prevent this, we must act with strict caution and full transparency.

Mr. President, the seabed may be one of the last truly intact parts of the Earth. If we have failed in so many other domains; climate, biodiversity, pollution, let us not fail here. This is our obligation to the common heritage of humankind. Let this be the gift that we pass on to the future generations.

Tuvalu stands ready to work with all of you to uphold that promise.

Thank you.