



## Council

Advance Unedited Version  
3 April 2025

English only

---

### Thirtieth session

Council session, part I

Kingston, 17–28 March 2025

## **Statement of the President on the work of the Council of the International Seabed Authority during the first part of the thirtieth session**

### **I. Opening of the session**

1. At the 325th meeting, on 17 March 2025, the President of the Council, Olav Myklebust (Norway), opened the first part of the thirtieth session. The Council met from 17 to 28 March 2025 and held ten meetings.

### **II. Adoption of the agenda**

2. At its 328th meeting, on 19 March 2025, the Council adopted the agenda for its thirtieth session (ISBA/30/C/1).

### **III. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Council**

3. At its 326th meeting, on 17 March 2025, the Council elected by acclamation Ambassador Duncan Muhumuza Laki (Uganda) as the President of the Council for its thirtieth session.

4. At the same meeting, the Council elected Brazil (Latin American and Caribbean States) and France (Western European and Other States) as Vice-Presidents, according to rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the International Seabed Authority. India (Asia-Pacific States) remained in office as Vice-President until the election of a new Vice-President took place, according to rules 22 and 23 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

5. Subsequently, at its 327th meeting, on 18 March 2025, the Council elected Singapore (Asia-Pacific States) as Vice-President.

#### **IV. Report of the Secretary-General on the credentials of members of the Council**

6. At the 329th meeting, on 27 March 2025, Madam Secretary General indicated that, as at that date, credentials had been received from 32 members of the Council.

#### **V. Status of the contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

7. At the 329th meeting, on 27 March 2025, the Council was presented with a report on the status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including the progress made in preparation for the signing of the ISA-Government of India PMS contract, the information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work, the status of relinquishments, the update of extension agreements, and the use of the new five-year periodic report template by contractors (ISBA/30/C/2). The Council took note of the content of the report.

#### **VI. Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area**

8. At its 326th meeting, on 17 March 2025, the Council took up agenda item 11, consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. All subsequent discussions on the draft regulations took place in informal sessions of the Council, open to participation by members of the Authority and observers.

9. In line with the revised road map, which was endorsed by the Council on 26 July 2024 (ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1, Annex III), to guide its work during the thirtieth session in 2025, and the President's briefing note of 28 January 2025, the President of the Council presented on 17 March 2025 the revised consolidated text of the draft regulations on exploitation of Mineral resources in the Area (ISBA/30/C/CRP.1), the revised suspense document (ISBA/30/C/CRP.2) and the updated compilation of proposals (ISBA/30/C/CRP.3). The President also suggested the working modalities for the first part of the thirtieth session.

10. The President highlighted that the primary objective of the revised consolidated text is to facilitate informal discussions within the Council, harmonize and streamline the draft regulations, and support the Council in finalizing its work on the draft regulations. Furthermore, the President underlined that achieving legal certainty is a fundamental objective of this drafting process and that the revised consolidated text should seek to establish clear, enforceable provisions that minimize ambiguities, strengthen regulatory compliance, and foster confidence among stakeholders. This goal necessitates a thorough review of the document's language, structure, and cross-references to ensure its integrity and effectiveness as a codified legal instrument.

11. During the informal meeting held on 17 March 2025, the Council discussed the Preamble of the revised consolidated text and agreed on the use of the term "harmful effects" in the second paragraph, which was preferred to the alternative text "Serious Harm", as it was considered more consistent with the wording of Article 145 of the

Convention. During the same meeting, cross-cutting discussions in relation to the nature and placement of Regional Environmental Management Plans (REMPs) were also held, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands offered to facilitate an informal working group on the legal nature of REMPs. This offer was warmly welcomed by members of the Authority and observers. Also, a reading of draft regulations 1 and 2 was conducted.

12. On 18 March 2025, the reading of draft regulation 2 was resumed and the members of the Authority and observers managed to conduct a reading until draft regulation 6. Discussions focused in particular on effective control in a cross-cutting manner. In this regard, there was agreement among delegations that additional intersessional work would be needed. The informal group on effective control, facilitated by Costa Rica and Chile, volunteered to continue this important work, which was warmly welcomed.

13. On 19 March 2025, the Council discussed draft regulations 7 to 13. Several delegations highlighted the need for a more comprehensive implementation of the Convention and the Agreement in respect of the legal regime of reserved areas. It was also suggested to carry out further discussion on the status and obligations of the Enterprise and the referencing throughout the regulations. Members of the Authority were encouraged to conduct further intersessional work in this regard.

14. On the morning of 20 March 2025, the Council held a thematic discussion on Underwater Cultural Heritage, which was facilitated by the Federated State of Micronesia on behalf of the informal group on Underwater Cultural Heritage. The members of the Authority and observers warmly welcomed the hard work of the group. There was strong support for the use of draft regulations 35<sup>alt</sup> – that was proposed by the informal working group – rather than draft regulation 35 as a basis to continue the discussion. There was also strong support for the continued work of the informal working group in respect of other regulations and welcomed the work to continue in a cross-cutting manner. Hereafter, the Council resumed the reading on draft regulation 13 and finished the day with a reading of draft regulation 18 bis.

15. During 21 March 2025, a reading of draft regulation 18<sup>ter</sup> was provided and was finished with a reading of draft regulation 30 bis. Several delegations expressed support for the newly introduced draft regulation 29<sup>ter</sup> on the certification of origin for minerals recovered in the Area, proposed by the Legal and Technical Commission during the 29th Session. It was agreed to include further details on such certification in the standard and guidelines.

16. Discussion on the revised consolidated text was resumed on 24 March 2025, covering draft regulations 31 to 38. With reference to the discussion on draft regulation 31 and 31bis, wide support was expressed for the proposal made by Singapore to separate the issue of reasonable regard from other activities in the marine environment from the one of reduction of risk of damage to submarine cables and pipelines. It was however noted the need to broaden the scope of draft regulation 31, by including reference to specific activities such as fishing.

17. On 25 March 2025, the Council conducted discussions on draft regulations 39 to 45. There was broad support for maintaining regulation on environmental goals and objectives in the regulations, and some delegations showed flexibility in respect of deferring such regulation to a general policy of the Authority.

18. On 26 March 2025, a joint proposal was presented by the delegations of Germany, Belgium and China on Test and Pilot Mining, currently included in draft regulations 48, 48<sup>alt</sup> and 48<sup>alt2</sup>. The work of the group was warmly welcomed by members of the Authority and observers, and was considered a very important development and a product of joint cooperation. The remainder of the day, the Council

conducted a reading of draft regulations 46 to 49. With particular reference to draft regulations 47 and 47bis, delegations recognized the substantial amount of work carried out in restructuring the two provisions, and welcomed the progresses made so far. Several delegations suggested switching the placement of the two provisions, since the scoping report should be undertaken before preparing the Environmental Impact Assessment. During the discussion on draft regulation 49, a brief summary of the proposal for restructuring the Section dedicated to the Environmental Management and Monitoring was presented by Norway and welcomed by members of the Authority and observers.

19. During 27 March 2025, after exhaustion of the discussion of other planned items, the Council managed to conduct a reading of draft regulations 50 and ended the reading of the regulations with draft regulation 52.

20. During the afternoon of 28 March 2025, the Council discussed from draft regulation 53 bis, on pollution control, to draft regulation 55, purpose of the environmental compensation fund.

21. Throughout the discussion on the revised consolidated text, the President warmly welcomed the hard work of the informal working groups, highlighting the importance of this work, both during the Council meeting and intersessional. It was agreed to defer consideration of outstanding cross-cutting issues to the relevant informal working group, in order to cover them in a more comprehensive manner. Considering the successful and constructive work of the informal working groups during the mornings and lunch breaks of the first part of the 30th session, it was proposed by the President that such work also will be conducted during the July 2025 session and that such work is scheduled well in advance in order for members of the Authority and observers to plan accordingly.

*High-level discussions on standards and guidelines.*

22. At the 330th meeting, on 27 March 2025, the Council took on a high-level discussion on standards and guidelines, as foreseen in the revised road map, which was endorsed by the Council on 26 July 2024 (ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1, Annex III). The President indicated that it is anticipated in the draft regulations that standards and guidelines are to be developed to support the implementation of the regulations. The President reminded that the Legal and Technical Commission, endorsed by this Council, recommended that an outcome-based approach should be used and that the standards and guidelines should be put in place in phases as follows (ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1, section IV.A and Annex):

Phase 1: Standard and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place by the time of adoption of the draft regulations on exploitation.

Phase 2: Standard and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place before the receipt of an application of a plan of work for exploitation.

Phase 3: Standard and guidelines deemed necessary to be in place before commercial mining activities commence in the Area.

23. In 2019, the Council requested the Legal and Technical Commission to work on standards and guidelines as a matter of priority. On that basis, in 2022, the Commission delivered to the Council for its consideration ten phase 1 draft Standard and Guidelines. It was suggested during the 26th session to work in parallel on the standards and guidelines, as expressed in ISBA/26/C/13. However, during the 27th session, there was growing support for the view that the draft exploitation regulations should be further developed and stabilized before commencing negotiations on the standards and guidelines. By the 29th session, it was suggested that high-level discussions on standards and guidelines should be undertaken. As a result, this was

incorporated into the referred revised roadmap of July 2024 (ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1, Annex III).

24. The President informed that, upon the request by some delegations, the Secretariat prepared a schedule or a list of standards and guidelines to assist in the discussions (ISBA/30/C/CRP.4). The President emphasized that this is a working document intended solely as a guidance tool and should be updated as negotiations on the regulations progress. The President clarified that no decisions have been made regarding the listing, placement, or inclusion of potential standards and guidelines. He further noted that consideration should be given to whether any proposed standards and guidelines could be consolidated with existing ones.

25. Several delegations expressed support for developing standards and guidelines in a coordinated manner alongside the ongoing negotiations on the draft regulations. Some delegations emphasized the importance of prioritizing this work and agreed that attention should be given to establishing clear working procedures for the development and adoption of standards and guidelines. Delegations proposed setting clear timelines for the Legal and Technical Commission to finalize standards and guidelines under each phase, identifying criteria to distinguish between matters that should be covered under the regulations and those that should be addressed as standards or guidelines. Delegations also underline that further discussions are needed in respect of the placement hierarchy. Several delegations expressed support for the Commission's efforts in preparing, developing, and updating standards and guidelines. Additionally, some delegations underscored the need to establish a formal procedure for stakeholder consultation in this process.

26. The President thanked the members of the Authority for their comments and highlighted the support for the schedule as a good working modality that can continue to be updated. The President also committed to preparing an updated proposal, along with a revised schedule outlining the next steps for advancing the Council's work. This revised plan will provide a clear roadmap for the three upcoming phases. The President indicated his intention to present the updated plan for discussion during the July 2025 meetings, ensuring that the Council has a structured and efficient approach to moving forward.

#### *Reports to the President by facilitators and rapporteurs*

27. , At its 332th meeting, on 28 March 2025, the Council took note of the oral report by the delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia, acting as rapporteur of the informal working group on Underwater Cultural Heritage, on the thematic discussion held 20 March 2025 (see annex I), as it was the only informal group to hold a thematic discussion during the first part of the session. The Council also took note that the other informal groups will report when the corresponding regulation is discussed in the Council.

#### *Review of the progress on the draft regulations*

28. The President underlined that during the first part of the 30th session, the Council engaged in constructive negotiations on key provisions of the draft exploitation regulations, from the preamble to draft regulation 55. Meaningful progress was made in refining the text, clarifying positions, and identifying areas where further work is needed. It was agreed to defer consideration of outstanding cross-cutting issues to the relevant informal working group, in order to cover them in a more comprehensive manner. The current list of the informal working groups is contained in annex II.

29. The President also commended the successful and constructive work of the informal working groups, which met during the mornings and lunch breaks. In light of their effectiveness, the Council took note of the President's proposal to continue

this practice during the July 2025 meetings. To ensure broad participation, it was emphasized that such sessions should be scheduled well in advance, allowing members of the Authority and observers to plan accordingly.

*Agreement on necessary intersessional work*

30. At its 330th meeting on 27 March 2025 and its 332nd meeting on 28 March 2025, the President proposed an additional modality of work: an informal volunteer facilitators arrangement designated as “Friends of the President” (see annex III). Their role would be to collaborate with interested delegations to refine specific topics or draft regulations. This arrangement is voluntary, informal, and time-limited, ensuring progress is made without introducing new procedural complexities. The proposal was warmly welcomed and endorsed in general by the Council, subjected to some minor adjustments to its text. Some delegations suggested that it would be beneficial to have a joint calendar on the International Seabed Authority’s website, providing information on the various smaller groups, their areas of focus, deadlines for deliverables, and meeting links. Additionally, some delegations highlighted that time zone differences could pose challenges for intersessional online meetings and encouraged the use of written proposals as an alternative.

## **VII. Further consideration of actions that the Council may take if an application were to be submitted before the Council has completed the RRP’s relating to exploitation**

31. At its 331st meeting, on 28 March 2025, the delegation of Nauru presented a document titled “Explanatory Non-Paper: Proposed Procedure for Consideration and Provisional Approval of Applications for Plans of Work for Exploitation under Paragraph 15(c) of the 1994 Agreement”. The delegation explained that it is working, along with its contractor, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. (NORI), to prepare an application for a plan of work for exploitation, intended to be submitted in June 2025. The delegation further noted that the objective of that document is to assist Member States in their consideration of a proposed procedure for the consideration and provisional approval of an application for a plan of work for exploitation in the absence of adopted rules, regulations and procedures on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. The delegation added that the document was not intended to be discussed in that meeting, but rather during the intersessional period.

32. Several delegations took the floor to express their views. Some delegations emphasized next steps must focus on continuing the negotiations of the exploitation regulations and developing an Authority’s general policy on the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Several delegations highlighted previous Council decisions adopted by consensus, emphasizing that commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area should not be carried out in the absence of the rules, regulations, and procedures.

## **VIII. Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session**

33. At its 329th meeting, on 27 March 2025, the Council took note of the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission at the first part of its thirtieth session (ISBA/30/C/4). The report includes information on prospecting, the report on the status of the contracts for exploration and periodic

reviews of the implementation of plans of work for exploration; the implementation of training programmes under plans of work for exploration and allocation of training opportunities; the consideration of annual reports of contractors; the relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts; review of the environmental impact statements submitted by contractors; the development of environmental threshold values; the development of a standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans; the development of regional environmental management plans in priority areas; the review of the workplan of the strategic road map for data management of the Authority for the period 2023–2028, and the identification of criteria which the Commission could use to decide whether to hold open meetings in accordance with its rules of procedure.

34. Council was also invited to take note of ISBA/30/C/3, which is a revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans, revised by the Legal and Technical Commission during its just concluded meeting.

35. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the ongoing work of the Commission. They took note of the re-election of Dr. Erasmo Lara-Cabrera, as chair of the Commission. Many delegations highlighted the Commission's constant efforts to respond to the requests of the Council while fulfilling its oversight, regulatory, and environmental responsibilities in the Area. Some delegations expressed concern regarding the low attendance recorded—the lowest in the current five-year term—and joined the Commission's call for Member States to provide the necessary support and ensure that their nationals attend the sessions. Few delegations proposed that, in cases of repeated absences, the possibility of replacement should be considered. Delegations commended the Commission's progress in the development of environmental threshold values and appreciated the constructive collaboration with independent experts.

36. Several delegations acknowledged the process adopted by the Commission to identify contractors whose performance may not be fully aligned with their contractual obligations. They welcomed the procedure outlined in document ISBA/29/LTC/5, as well as the decision to hold exchanges of views between sessions, in line with the modalities set out in ISBA/29/LTC/6, while some delegations stressed the need for the Commission to identify contractors in breach of their contractual obligations. Some delegations reiterated the need for open meetings on non-confidential issues, as some delegations welcomed the exploration of new modalities, such as informal seminars, to discuss non-confidential aspects of the Commission's work.

37. Some delegations recognised the Commission's technical work in reviewing the standardized procedure for REMPs, as well as its openness to incorporating substantive observations from States and observers.

Decision of the Council of the International Seabed Authority on the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment upon request by the Government of India

38. At its 330th meeting, on 27 March 2025, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission on a request by the Government of India (ISBA/30/C/4, Annex), the Council approved the deferral of the schedule of the second relinquishment to 30 September 2028, regarding its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean. The Council took note that the Delegation of Mexico requested that the exceptional circumstance justifying the deferral of the deadline for India's second relinquishment be clearly established as the COVID-19 pandemic. The delegation added that this request is based on the fact

that, during the deferral of the first relinquishment deadline, the deadline for the second relinquishment was not extended.

## **IX. Other matters**

39. At its 331st meeting, on 28 March 2025, pursuant to Rule 30, paragraph 3, of the Rule of Procedure of the Council, that states that the Secretary-General shall keep the members of the Council informed of any questions which may be of interest to the Council, Madam Secretary-General requested the floor to refer to the announcement made on 27 March 2025 by The Metals Company that its subsidiary, TMC USA, has initiated the process of applying for commercial recovery permits under the US Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act of 1980. The Secretary-General expressed that it is imperative to reaffirm the Authority's exclusive mandate. The Authority remains the sole organization through which States Parties shall, in accordance with Part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, particularly in administering its resources. She emphasized that all exploration and exploitation activities in the Area must be carried out under the Authority's control and that this remains the only universally recognized legitimate framework. The Secretary-General also underscored that any unilateral action would constitute a violation of international law and directly undermine the fundamental principles of multilateralism, the peaceful use of the oceans and the collective governance framework established under the Convention. The Secretary-General underlined that she remains firmly dedicated to the Authority's mandate, ensuring that activities in the Area are conducted for the benefit of all humankind. As the Secretary-General took note of the continued commitment of the Council to advancing negotiations of the draft exploitation regulations, she reaffirmed the Secretariat's full commitment to supporting the Authority's Member States in the critical steps ahead.

40. Delegations expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General for her statement and reaffirmed their full support for her, the Authority, and the Convention. Many delegations emphasized that the adoption of the Convention was a deliberate commitment to upholding order and cooperation in contrast to unilateral actions. Several delegations underscored that the Convention explicitly establishes that no State, natural person, or legal entity may claim sovereignty, exercise sovereign rights, or appropriate any part of the Area or its resources. Delegations also voiced serious concerns regarding the decision by TMC USA, recalling the 2023 Council decisions, which made clear that exploitation activities should not commence until the necessary rules, regulations, and procedures are in place. In this context, several delegations reaffirmed their commitment to continue engaging in this process in good faith, to create a governance framework that serves the collective interest of humankind. The Interim Director-General for the Enterprise also underlined that the principle of the common heritage of humankind, which the Enterprise, an organ of the Authority, was established to give effect to, is not only a rule under public international law, but also a rule of customary international law, a norm which is also binding on non-States Parties to the Convention which have through state practice, accepted Part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement as a norm of *jus cogens*, a non-derogable norm under international law. The mechanism which established 'reserved areas' is a critical component of the system of access to the international seabed area (the 'Area') and its mineral resources under the Convention. The system of reserved areas is the means by which the Convention ensures that the Enterprise is able to participate directly in activities in the Area. The reserved areas are held in a 'site bank' which is maintained for access by the Enterprise. Any attempt to undertake activities in the Area outside of the mandate of the Authority and under the rubric of the Convention



and the 1994 Agreement, would affect, or even eliminate the ability of the Enterprise to discharge its mandate either initially through a joint venture arrangement, or directly at a later stage in its development. This would be highly unacceptable and directly affect the implementation of the principles embodied in Article 136 of the Convention and the equitable sharing of benefits from the proceeds of activities in the Area.

## Annex I

### Reports to the President by facilitators and rapporteurs

#### **Oral report delivered by the rapporteur of the intersessional working group concerning the thematic discussion on underwater cultural heritage, Clement Yow Mulalap (Federated States of Micronesia)**

1. Last week, on Thursday, 20 March 2025, the Council held an informal thematic discussion on Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) for one and a half hours, which my delegation facilitated. Please note that at the end of the period allocated to the discussion on Thursday, there were nearly a dozen Members of the Authority whose flags were still up but had yet to make interventions, so this summary that I am delivering now is necessarily an incomplete one and should not be taken to represent a comprehensive understanding on my part of the views of all interested Members and Observers of the Authority. During the discussion on 20 March, participants engaged on three questions.

3. The first question asked whether the draft exploitation regulations should address underwater cultural heritage just in DR35/35alt, or take a broader approach to the matter. The participants who spoke on this question generally supported a broader approach to UCH, although a number of those participants focused their comments on DR35/35alt on Thursday.

4. The second question asked participants to indicate their preference for either DR35alt or DR35, as well as what their comments were for the text of one or both DRs. Most of the participants who spoke on this question generally preferred DR35alt to DR35, although there was a mention of support for DR35 as a reasonable compromise between the various interests at stake. Participants who engaged on the second question also expressed various views on whether the LTC or the Council should be tasked with the various roles under DR35, whether to go with paragraph 4 or the series of paras for paragraph 4alt with respect to how inclusive and broad the consultations undertaken under the DR would be, and whether to compensate Contractors who are impacted under the DR.

5. The third question asked those participants who support a broad approach to UCH in the DRs, to indicate what their views were on the purpose and substance of those other DRs. The participants who responded to the third question highlighted the utility of referring to UCH in, for example, EISes and the overall EIA process, EMMPs, UCHMPS, and baseline surveys of the seabed in connection with those environmental documents and other processes under the regulations. Participants also highlighted the relevance of the 2001 and 2003 UNESCO Conventions on UCH and intangible cultural heritage, particularly their definitions of UCH and intangible cultural heritage, although there was also a comment that while the work done by UNESCO on UCH would be covered by UNCLOS as a whole, there is a question as to whether the ISA as a specific entity would be allowed by UNCLOS to address UCH via its Mining Code. Participants additionally discussed whether there should be a standalone Committee on UCH – those who spoke on Thursday generally supported its creation, although I stress that the discussion on Thursday ran out of time before we could hear from all interested Members of the Authority.

6. There were also views expressed about the longstanding cultural connections of various Indigenous Peoples and communities to the Ocean, including the deep sea and seabed. The point was expressed about the need for a reciprocal relationship between humankind and the deep sea and seabed, as well as the notion of proper stewardship of the marine environment. Another point was articulated about how so-

called pure intangible UCH such as the examples expressed in the discussion on Thursday might not fit properly under the notion of UCH but could be captured through other approaches, such as references to traditional knowledge as well as the establishment of sites of particular cultural interest. Relatedly, there was also a bit of discussion on the issue of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities, including their right to be consulted and involved in activities affecting them and their interests, with different views expressed on the matter.

7. Looking forward, my delegation believes that further work on UCH can and should be conducted by the Council, including in an intersessional working group. There remain differences of views on how, exactly, to reflect UCH and related matters in the regulations, but there seems to be broad acceptance of the need to reflect UCH and related matters in some form in the regulations. There is also genuine and respectful engagement on the matter from multiple corners, inclusive of Members and Observers of the Authority, for which I remain deeply grateful.

8. I have also taken note of the proposed additional modality of work for the Council going forward in the form of "Friends of the President." I recommend that this new modality, if implemented, should complement rather than duplicate the work of the UCH IWG, and vice versa, assuming that the Council agrees that the IWG is to continue its work. I stress that the UCH IWG has actually crafted and discussed possible textual proposals on UCH, rather than merely conducted high-level thematic discussions. If the Council now feels that the UCH IWG should stick to high-level discussions and refrain from engaging on specific textual proposals in deference to one or more groups of "Friends of the President," then it will be helpful to make this clear to the IWG as soon as possible. Similarly, if the Council now wants to convert the UCH IWG into a "Friends of the President" group to focus on just textual proposals under the proposed additional modality of work, then it will be helpful to make this clear to the IWG as soon as possible.

9. Finally, in terms of the facilitation of the UCH IWG if it is to continue its work, I inform the Council that, after constructive discussions with the delegations of Brazil and Greece, I wish to invite the delegations of Brazil and Greece to join the FSM delegation in co-facilitating the UCH IWG going forward, assuming that the Council wishes for the FSM delegation to continue facilitating the IWG in some form. This will be in line with the practice already established with a number of other intersessional working groups of the Council.

## Annex II

### Current list of informal working groups

Gr. no.	Focus	Rapporteur
1.	Effective control <i>(Cross cutting issues and DR 5, 6, 13, 21, 24, 40, Annex I, section I, para 13ter, definition in Schedule)</i>	Costa Rica and Chile
2.	ICE mechanism <i>(Draft regulation 102)</i>	Norway
3.	Equalization measure <i>(Draft regulation 64 bis and draft Equalization Standard)</i>	Australia
4.	Rights and interests of coastal States <i>(Cross cutting issues)</i>	Portugal/Singapore
5.	Underwater Cultural Heritage <i>(Cross cutting issues, inclusive of draft regulations 35 and 35 Alt, among others)</i>	Micronesia/Brazil/Greece
6.	Environmental Management and Monitoring <i>(Section 3 of Part IV, draft regulations 49-52 and Annex VII)</i>	Norway
7.	Test Mining <i>(Draft regulation 48 ter and 48 ter Alt.)</i>	Germany/Belgium/China
8.	Closure plans <i>(Part VI, draft regulations 59-61)</i>	Fiji
9.	Reference to REMPs <i>(Cross cutting issues)</i>	Netherlands

## Annex III

### **Proposal by the President of the Council on an additional modality of work, “Friends of the President”**

**International Seabed Authority**

**28 March 2025, first part of the thirtieth session.**

1. To advance discussions efficiently, the President proposes to the Council an additional modality of work—an informal "Friends of the President" arrangement. This voluntary initiative would allow delegations interested in a specific topic or a draft regulation to facilitate focused and flexible discussions to refine text and build consensus.
2. Under this arrangement, Friends of the President would coordinate with interested delegations to develop agreed text on a specific topic or draft regulation for inclusion in the draft regulations by the conclusion of the 30th Session. This arrangement would likely work best on specific topics or draft regulations where there is already some level of agreement, and some further efforts are needed to land on specific language.
3. The details of this arrangement are as follow:
  - Volunteers shall coordinate with delegations with particular interest in a specific topic or a specific draft regulation, with a goal of producing relevant text agreed upon by the group. Volunteers are free to explore various discussion methods, including via intersessional videoconference meetings, written comments, and in-person side meetings during the Session.
  - Volunteers shall submit the text agreed upon by the group to the President and the Secretariat by the end of the 30th Session for inclusion in the draft regulations.
  - During the reading of the Revised Consolidated Text, upon reaching a draft regulation with text submitted by a volunteer, the volunteer shall take the floor to present the text, after which comments from other delegations shall be invited.
  - A volunteer’s substantive work shall be completed once the text is turned around and included in the draft regulations, unless the President requests, and the volunteer in question agrees, to extend this arrangement for another Session.
4. Interactions with existing working modalities:
  - This arrangement does not replace nor preclude other working modalities. It may take place in parallel with other working modalities.
  - This arrangement differs from existing working groups in that: (i) the expected deliverables by volunteers are limited only to text to be included in the draft regulations; (ii) a volunteer’s substantive work is completed once the text is included in the draft regulation; (iii) volunteers shall report to the President, and present their text to the Council at the reading of the Revised Consolidated Text.
5. This approach offers several benefits:
  - It provides an additional, flexible pathway for advancing discussions.
  - It encourages ownership of the text among delegations.
  - It complements, rather than replaces, existing working groups.

- It is voluntary, informal, and time-limited, ensuring efficiency without adding procedural complexities.
6. Delegations interested in serving as Friends of the President are invited to indicate their interest to the Secretariat at any time from 28 March 2025 or during the intersessional period. A list of volunteers and their respective topics will be made available to all delegations and updated regularly on the Authority's website in the spirit of transparency and inclusivity.
7. Germany, China, and Belgium's initiative to develop text on Test Mining draft regulations this week is highly commendable. Delegations are encouraged to make similar efforts, including via the above arrangement. This is a valuable opportunity to make tangible progress in areas where common ground already exists.