



Council

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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 of the Council, on 17 March 2025, its President for the twenty-ninth session, Olav Myklebust (Norway), opened the first part of the thirtieth session. The Council met from 17 to 28 March 2025.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. At the 325th meeting, on 17 March 2025, the President invited the Council to consider the provisional agenda of the Council (ISBA/30/C/L.1/Rev.1). 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.

5. 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, the Secretary-General presented the credentials report. Credentials had been received from 32 members of the Council,

and Notes Verbales received from four members of the Council for the purpose of accreditation.

V. Status of the contracts for exploration and related matters

7. At the 329th meeting, on 27 March 2025, the Council considered and took note of a report on the status of contracts for exploration and related matters, including information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration (ISBA/30/C/2).

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 (“Draft Regulations”). All subsequent discussions on the draft regulations took place in informal settings 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, to guide its work during the thirtieth session in 2025 (ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1, Annex III), and the President’s briefing note of 28 January 2025¹, the President of the Council presented the revised consolidated text of the Draft Regulations², the revised suspense document³ and the updated compilation of proposals⁴. 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, harmonise and streamline the draft regulations, and support the Council in finalising 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. From 17 to 28 March 2025, the President presided the negotiations of the Draft Regulations through regulation-by-regulation discussion, and completed the reading of the revised consolidated text from the Preamble through to draft regulation 55. In the Preamble, the Council agreed on the use of the term “harmful effects”, which was preferred to the alternative text “Serious Harm”, as it was considered more consistent with the wording of Article 145 of the Convention. Additionally, there was broad convergence on the text of various draft regulations. At the same time, several new cross-cutting issues were identified for further discussions, such as the nature and placement of Regional Environmental Management Plans (REMPs), application of the regulations to the Enterprise concerning reserved areas, placement of some environmental elements under a general environmental policy of the Authority. During the negotiations, a number of delegations expressed support for the newly introduced draft regulation 29ter on the certification of origin for minerals recovered in the Area, proposed by the Legal and Technical Commission during the 29th Session. There was broad support for maintaining draft regulation 44ter on

¹ See <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Presidents-Briefing-Note-on-the-Revised-Consolidated-Text-13Mar2025.pdf>

² See <https://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-1/>

³ See <https://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-2/>

⁴ See https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Compilation_of_Proposals.pdf

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.

12. On 20 March 2025, the Council held a thematic discussion on Underwater Cultural Heritage, which was facilitated by the Federated States of Micronesia on behalf of the informal group on Underwater Cultural Heritage. There was strong support for the use of draft regulation 35alt – 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.

13. Additionally, a joint proposal was presented by the delegations of Germany, Belgium and China on Test and Pilot Mining, currently included in draft regulations 48, 48alt and 48alt2. 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. Also, 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.

14. On the margin of the meetings, four informal working groups held informal meetings on thematic issues: the ICE mechanism, facilitated by Norway, equalization measure, facilitated by Australia, rights and interests of coastal States, facilitated by Portugal, and test/pilot mining, facilitated by Germany, Belgium and China.

High-level discussions on standards and guidelines.

15. 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 three phases (ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1, section IV.A and Annex).

16. 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.⁵ 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.

17. Several delegations expressed support for developing standards and guidelines in a coordinated and transparent manner alongside the ongoing negotiations on the draft regulations. Others, however, emphasized the need for the Council to focus primarily on the negotiation of the exploitation regulations. Some delegations emphasized the importance of prioritizing the revision of phase 1 by the Legal and Technical Commission and to develop phase 2 and phase 3. Delegations also agreed that attention should be given to establishing a clear placement hierarchy and a procedural framework, including a formal stakeholder consultation procedure, as well as their periodic review. Delegations thanked the Secretariat for the list and proposed that it be maintained as a living document—regularly updated in line with the progress of the negotiations on the regulations. Some delegations proposed specific changes to

⁵ See <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Draft-list-of-Standards-and-Guidelines-ISBA30.pdf>

the content of the list, and to group, harmonize or streamline some of them, to minimise administrative overhead. Delegations proposed setting clear timelines for the Commission to finalize them under each phase, identifying criteria to distinguish matters that should be covered under the regulations or addressed as standards or guidelines.

18. 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, for discussion during the July 2025 Council meetings, along with a revised schedule outlining the next steps for advancing the Council's work, ensuring that the Council has a structured and efficient approach to moving forward.

Reports to the President by facilitators and rapporteurs

19. At its 332th meeting, on 28 March 2025, the Council took note of the oral report⁶ 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 on 20 March 2025, as it was the only informal group to hold a thematic discussion during the first part of the session. The Council was also reminded that the other informal groups will report when the corresponding regulation is discussed in the Council.

Review of the progress on the draft regulations

20. 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 I.

21. 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 President encouraged member States to continue this practice during the July 2025 Council meetings. To ensure broad participation, it was emphasized that such informal meetings should be scheduled well in advance, allowing members of the Authority and observers to plan accordingly.

Agreement on necessary intersessional work

22. 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 II). 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.

23. The proposal was warmly welcomed and endorsed in general by the Council, subject to some minor adjustments to its text. Some delegations suggested that having a joint calendar on the Authority's website would be beneficial, providing information on the various smaller groups, their areas of focus, deadlines for deliverables, and meeting links. Some delegations noted that time zone differences could challenge intersessional online meetings and suggested using written proposals as an

⁶ See <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250328-Oral-report-by-Micronesia-UCH.pdf>

alternative. Few delegations encouraged facilitators of the existing informal working groups and Friends of the President to submit their proposals one month before the July 2025 meetings.

24. Regarding the negotiations of the Draft Regulations, the delegation of Chile, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States Group, requested that if a text proposal has received substantive support, that circumstance should be reflected in the text. The group also proposed establishing a transitional process between sessions, considering the change in the Council Presidency. This would involve coordination between the outgoing President and the incoming nominee to exchange views on the text of the Draft Regulations during the preparatory phase. In this context, the group recommended that each regional group nominate a representative at the close of the previous session.

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

25. 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”.⁷ 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 on 27 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 during the intersessional period.

26. 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. Various delegations expressed concern at the pace of negotiations on the draft regulations. Some delegations highlighted the legal and practical challenges of assessing a plan of work application under the two-year rule, while others maintained that the Convention and the 1994 Agreement clearly set out the applicable procedure. Several delegations highlighted previous Council decisions adopted by consensus, emphasizing that the commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the Area should not be carried out in the absence of the rules, regulations, and procedures relating to exploitation.

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

27. At its 329th meeting, on 27 March 2025, the President introduced 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).

⁷ See https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Explanatory_Non_Paper_Proposed_Procedure_for_Consideration-and-Provisional-Approval-of-Applications-for-Plans-of-Work-for-Exploitation-under-Paragraph-15c-of-the-1994-Agreement-1.pdf

28. The Council was also invited to consider a revised standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of regional environmental management plans (ISBA/30/C/3). Some delegations recognised the Commission's progress in reviewing this standardized procedure, as well as its openness to incorporating substantive observations from States and observers.

29. Delegations commended the hard work of the Commission. Many delegations congratulated Erasmo Lara-Cabrera and Sissel Eriksen for their re-election as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission. Several delegations expressed concern over the low attendance recorded at the meeting of the Commission and called for member States to provide the necessary support to ensure that the nominated members of the Commission attend the meetings. The President informed that the Secretariat utilized the voluntary trust fund to support all the Commission's members from developing countries who requested financial assistance to attend the meeting and called for further contributions to the fund to ensure sufficient participation in the July 2025 meetings.

30. Many delegations commended the Commission's constant efforts to respond to the requests of the Council while fulfilling its oversight, regulatory, and environmental responsibilities in the Area. Many delegations welcomed the progress in the development of environmental threshold values and appreciated the constructive collaborative approach by engaging independent experts..

31. Several delegations acknowledged the process adopted by the Commission to identify contractors whose performance may not be fully aligned with their contractual obligations, including holding exchanges of views with identified contractors between sessions, in line with the modalities set out in ISBA/29/LTC/6. Some delegations stressed the need for the Commission to provide the names of those contractors that have responded insufficiently or incompletely, or failed to respond, to the calls from the Council to address issues of concern identified by the Commission in relation to their contractual obligations.

32. Many delegations underlined the importance of the contractor's training program and its significant implication to the capacity building of developing countries.

33. Some delegations recognized the commitment and efforts of the Commission to enhance engagement, openness and transparency in its work, including holding open meetings where appropriate and in accordance with its rules of procedure, and welcomed its exploration of new modalities, such as informal webinars to engage with stakeholders on non-confidential aspects of its work.

34. At its 330th meeting, on 27 March 2025, the Council approved the request by the Government of India to defer the schedule of the second relinquishment to 30 September 2028, regarding its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean.⁸

IX. Other matters

35. At its 331st meeting, on 28 March 2025, the Council took up the agenda item 20, other matters. Pursuant to Rule 30, paragraph 3, of the Rules of Procedure of the Council, Madam Secretary-General informed the Council of the announcement made on 27 March 2025 by The Metals Company that its subsidiary, TMC USA, had 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

⁸ See ISBA/30/C/6

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 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.

36. Delegations expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General for her statement and reaffirmed their full support for her, the Authority, and the Convention as a cornerstone of the multilateral system. 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 and disappointment regarding the decision by TMC USA, recalling the 2023 Council decisions, which made clear that the commercial exploitation should not be carried out in the absence of rules, regulations, and procedures relating to exploitation. In this context, a number of 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 against unilateral actions. Some delegations cautioned that delays in the negotiations could complicate the situation even more. Delegations also underlined that the principle of the common heritage of humankind as provided by article 136 of the Convention, 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.

Annex I

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/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 II

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

28 March 2025

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. A special list of Friends of the President will be published —distinct from the list of the current informal working groups⁹—once volunteers have signed up as Friends of the President.

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. These topics or draft regulations should be distinct from those currently being addressed by the informal working groups. 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:

A Friend of the President 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. Friends of the President are free to explore various discussion methods, including via intersessional videoconference meetings, written comments, and in-person side meetings during the July 2025 Council meetings.

Friends of the President are encouraged to submit the text agreed upon by the group to the President and the Secretariat by 27 June 2025, to allow sufficient time for publication on the Authority’s website and its analysis by delegations. Friends of the President may prioritise to submitting by 27 June 2025 text related to specific topics or draft regulations that were not discussed during the March 2025 Council meetings. Submissions by Friends of the President will continue to be accepted until the end of the 30th Session. Submissions will be uploaded on the Authority’s website.

During the reading of the Revised Consolidated Text (ISBA/30/C/CRP.1)¹⁰ throughout the July 2025 Council meetings, upon reaching a draft regulation with a proposed text submitted by a Friend of the President, the Friend of the President shall take the floor to present the text (previously uploaded on the Authority’s webpage), after which comments from other delegations shall be invited.

A Friend of the President’s substantive work shall be completed once the text is turned around and included in the draft regulations by the end of the 30th Session, unless the President requests, and the Friend of the President in question agrees, to extend this arrangement for another session.

⁹ See annex I for the existing informal working groups.

¹⁰ See <https://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf>

A Friend of the President may hold informal meetings during morning or lunch breaks throughout the July 2025 Council meetings, should they and the members of their group find it necessary.

A delegation can volunteer to become a Friend of the President at any time from March 2025 until the end of the 30th session.

4. Interactions with existing working modalities:

This arrangement is distinct from, and does not replace nor preclude, other working modalities or the existing informal working groups. It may operate in parallel with other working modalities.

This arrangement differs from existing working groups in that: (i) the expected deliverables by the Friends of the President are limited only to text to be included in the draft regulations; (ii) a Friend of the President's substantive work is completed once the text is included in the draft regulation; (iii) a Friend of the President 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 express their interest to the Secretariat at any time from 28 March 2025 or during the intersessional period.

7. In the spirit of transparency and inclusivity, a list of Friends of the President will be made available to all delegations and regularly updated on the Authority's website. The list of Friends of the President will include the name of the delegation, the topic they are working on, meeting dates and deadlines, the type of interaction (e.g., videoconference, written comments, email, WhatsApp, etc.), the texts under discussion or documents submitted by members of the group, and the final text submitted. If the group decides to hold meetings during the July 2025 Council meetings, the list will also include relevant details such as meeting dates, format, room numbers, and any additional documents.