



## Council

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### 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, the 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.

### II. Adoption of the agenda

2. At the 325th meeting, 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, 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, the Council elected by acclamation Duncan Muhumuza Laki (Uganda) as 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, 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, the Secretary-General presented the report on credentials. Credentials had been received from 32 members of the Council, and notes verbales 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, 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, the Council took up agenda item 11, on the 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 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 (see [ISBA/29/C/9/Add.1](#), annex III), and the President's briefing note of 28 January 2025,<sup>1</sup> the President presented the revised consolidated text of the draft regulations,<sup>2</sup> the revised suspense document<sup>3</sup> and the updated compilation of proposals.<sup>4</sup> 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 was 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 was a fundamental objective of the 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, the President presided over the negotiations on the draft regulations through regulation-by-regulation discussion, and completed the reading of the revised consolidated text from the preamble to draft regulation 55. With regard to 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 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition, there was broad convergence on the text of various draft regulations. At the same time, several new cross-cutting issues were identified for further discussion, such as the nature and placement of regional environmental management plans, the application of the regulations to the Enterprise concerning reserved areas, and the 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 29 ter on the certification of origin for minerals recovered in the Area, proposed by the Legal and Technical Commission during the twenty-ninth session. There was broad support for maintaining draft regulation 44 ter on environmental goals and objectives in the

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

<sup>2</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-1](http://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-1).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-2](http://www.isa.org.jm/documents/isba-30-c-crp-2).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Compilation\\_of\\_Proposals.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Compilation_of_Proposals.pdf).

regulations, and some delegations showed flexibility in respect of deferring such a regulation to a general policy of the Authority.

12. On 20 March, 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 35 alt, proposed by the group, rather than draft regulation 35 as a basis to continue the discussion. There was also strong support for the continued work of the group in respect of other regulations, and work to continue in a cross-cutting manner was welcomed.

13. In addition, a joint proposal was presented by the delegations of Belgium, China and Germany on test and pilot mining, currently included in draft regulations 48, 48 alt and 48 alt 2. 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. During the discussion on draft regulation 49, a brief summary of the proposal for restructuring the section dedicated to environmental management and monitoring was presented by Norway and welcomed by other members of the Authority and observers.

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

#### *High-level discussions on standards and guidelines*

15. At the 330th meeting, on 27 March, the Council conducted a high-level discussion on standards and guidelines, as set out in the revised road map. The President indicated that it was anticipated in the draft regulations that standards and guidelines should be developed to support the implementation of the regulations. The President reminded participants that the Legal and Technical Commission, as endorsed by the Council, had recommended that an outcome-based approach should be used and that the standards and guidelines should be put in place in three phases (see [ISBA/25/C/19/Add.1](#), sect. IV.A and annex).

16. The President indicated that, upon the request of some delegations, the secretariat had prepared a schedule, or list of standards and guidelines, to assist in the discussions.<sup>5</sup> He emphasized that this was 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 negotiating the regulations on exploitation. Some emphasized the importance of prioritizing the revision of phase 1 by the Legal and Technical Commission and of developing phases 2 and 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 period 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 that specific changes be made to the content of the list and that some of the changes be grouped, harmonized or streamlined to

<sup>5</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Draft-list-of-Standards-and-Guidelines-ISBA30.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Draft-list-of-Standards-and-Guidelines-ISBA30.pdf).

minimize the administrative overhead. Delegations also proposed setting clear timelines for the Commission to finalize the changes for each phase, identifying criteria to distinguish whether matters 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 could continue to be updated. He also committed to preparing an updated proposal, for discussion during the Council meetings in July 2025, along with a revised schedule outlining the next steps for advancing the Council's work, to ensure that the Council has a structured and efficient approach to moving forward.

*Reports to the President by facilitators and rapporteurs*

19. At its 332nd meeting, on 28 March, the Council took note of the oral report by the delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia,<sup>6</sup> acting as rapporteur of the informal working group on underwater cultural heritage, on the thematic discussion held on 20 March, as it was the only informal group to hold a thematic discussion during the first part of the session. In addition, the Council was reminded that the other informal groups would report when the corresponding regulation is discussed in the Council.

*Review of progress on the draft regulations*

20. The President underlined that, during the first part of the thirtieth session, the Council had engaged in constructive negotiations on key provisions of the draft regulations on exploitation, from the preamble to draft regulation 55. Meaningful progress had been made in refining the text, clarifying positions and identifying areas in which further work was 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 list of current informal working groups is contained in annex I.

21. The President also commended the informal working groups for their successful and constructive work, meeting during the mornings and lunch breaks. In the light of their effectiveness, he encouraged member States to continue that practice during the Council meetings in July 2025. 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 and 332nd meetings, the President proposed an additional modality of work: an informal arrangement of volunteer facilitators 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. The arrangement is voluntary, informal and time-limited, ensuring that progress is made without introducing new procedural complexities.

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

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250328-Oral-report-by-Micronesia-UCH.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250328-Oral-report-by-Micronesia-UCH.pdf).

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

24. With regard to the negotiations of the draft regulations, the delegation of Chile, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, 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 prior session.

## **VII. Further consideration of actions that the Council may take if an application were submitted before the Council has completed the rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation**

25. At its 331st meeting, on 28 March, 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”.<sup>7</sup> The delegation explained that it was working 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 noted that the objective of the document was 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 emphasized that the next steps must focus on continuing the negotiations on the regulations on exploitation and developing an Authority’s general policy on the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Various delegations expressed concern about the pace of negotiations on the draft regulations. Some delegations highlighted the legal and practical challenges of assessing an application for a plan of work 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.

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<sup>7</sup> See [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](http://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).

## **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, 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](#)).

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

29. Delegations commended the Commission for its hard work. 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 regarding the low attendance recorded at the Commission meeting and called for member States to provide the support necessary to ensure that the nominated members of the Commission attend the meetings. The President stated that the secretariat used the voluntary trust fund to support all Commission 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 meetings in July 2025.

30. Many delegations commended the Commission for its constant efforts to respond to the requests of the Council while fulfilling its oversight, regulatory and environmental responsibilities in the Area. Many also welcomed the progress in the development of environmental threshold values and stated that they appreciated the constructive collaborative approach of engaging with 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 document [ISBA/29/LTC/6](#). Some delegations stressed the need for the Commission to provide the names of contractors that had 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 programme and its significant implication for 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, the Council approved the request by the Government of India to defer the schedule of the second relinquishment to 30 September 2028 regarding the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean (see [ISBA/30/C/6](#)).

## IX. Other matters

35. At its 331st meeting, the Council took up agenda item 20, Other matters, pursuant to rule 30, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the Council. The Secretary-General informed the Council of the announcement made on 27 March by The Metals Company that its subsidiary, TMC USA, had initiated the process of applying for commercial recovery permits under the Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act of the United States of America of 1980. She expressed the view that it was 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, in particular 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. She underlined that she remained firmly dedicated to the Authority's mandate, ensuring that activities in the Area are conducted for the benefit of all humankind. Taking note of the continued commitment of the Council to advancing negotiations on the draft regulations on exploitation, she reaffirmed the secretariat's full commitment to supporting 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 established 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 Council's decisions in 2023, in which it had made clear that commercial exploitation should not be carried out in the absence of rules, regulations and procedures relating to exploitation. In that context, a number of delegations reaffirmed their commitment to continue to engage in the process in good faith, in order 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 for in article 136 of the Convention, was not only a rule under public international law, but also a rule of customary international law, a norm that is also binding on States that are not Parties to the Convention that 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

## List of current informal working groups

<i>Group number</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Rapporteur(s)</i>
1.	Effective control (Cross-cutting issues and draft regulations 5, 6, 13, 21, 24 and 40, annex I, sect. I, para. 13 ter, definition in schedule)	Chile and Costa Rica
2.	Inspection, compliance and enforcement mechanism (Draft regulation 102)	Norway
3.	Equalization measure (Draft regulation 64 bis and draft equalization standard)	Australia
4.	Rights and interests of coastal States (Cross-cutting issues)	Portugal and Singapore
5.	Underwater cultural heritage (Cross-cutting issues, including draft regulations 35 and 35 alt)	Brazil, Greece and Micronesia (Federated States of)
6.	Environmental management and monitoring (Sect. 3 of part IV, draft regulations 49–52 and annex VII)	Norway
7.	Test mining (Draft regulations 48 ter and 48 ter alt.)	Belgium, China and Germany
8.	Closure plans (Part VI, draft regulations 59–61)	Fiji
9.	Reference to regional environmental management plans (Cross-cutting issues)	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)



## Annex II

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

28 March 2025

1. To advance discussions efficiently, the President proposes to the Council of the International Seabed Authority an additional modality of work, an informal arrangement designated as “Friends of the President”. This voluntary initiative would allow delegations interested in a specific topic or draft regulation to facilitate focused and flexible discussions to refine the text and build consensus. A special list of Friends of the President will be published, distinct from the list of the current informal working groups (see annex I above), once volunteers have signed up as Friends of the President.

2. Under the arrangement, the 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 thirtieth session. These topics or draft regulations should be distinct from those currently being addressed by the informal working groups. The arrangement would likely work best on specific topics or draft regulations for which there is already some level of agreement but further efforts are needed to agree on specific language.

3. The details of the arrangement are as follows:

(a) A Friend of the President shall coordinate with delegations with a particular interest in a specific topic or 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 intersessional videoconference meetings, written comments and in-person side meetings during the Council meetings in July 2025;

(b) Friends of the President are encouraged to submit the text agreed upon by the group to the President and the secretariat by 27 June to allow sufficient time for publication on the Authority’s website and its analysis by delegations. Friends of the President may prioritize the submission by 27 June of text related to specific topics or draft regulations that were not discussed during the Council meetings in March 2025. Submissions by Friends of the President will continue to be accepted until the end of the thirtieth session and will be uploaded to the Authority’s website;

(c) During the reading of the revised consolidated text<sup>1</sup> throughout the Council meetings in July 2025, upon reaching a draft regulation with a proposed text submitted by a Friend of the President, the Friend shall take the floor to present the text (previously uploaded to the Authority’s webpage), after which other delegations shall be invited to provide comments;

(d) The substantive work of a Friend of the President shall be completed once the text is turned around and included in the draft regulations by the end of the thirtieth session, unless the President requests, and the Friend in question agrees, to extend the arrangement for another session;

(e) Friends of the President may hold informal meetings during morning or lunch breaks throughout the Council meetings in July 2025, should they and the members of their group find it necessary;

<sup>1</sup> See [www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf](http://www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/10012025-Revised-Consolidated-Text-2.pdf).

(f) A delegation may volunteer to become a Friend of the President at any time from March 2025 until the end of the thirtieth session.

4. Interactions with existing working modalities:

(a) The arrangement is distinct from and does not replace or preclude other working modalities or the existing informal working groups. It may operate in parallel with other working modalities;

(b) The arrangement differs from existing working groups in that: (i) the expected deliverables by Friends of the President are limited only to text to be included in the draft regulations; (ii) the substantive work of a Friend of the President is completed once the text is included in the draft regulation; (iii) Friends 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:

(a) It provides an additional, flexible pathway for advancing discussions;

(b) It encourages ownership of the text among delegations;

(c) It complements, rather than replaces, existing working groups;

(d) 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, during the intersessional period.

7. In a spirit of transparency and inclusivity, a list of Friends of the President will be made available to all delegations and updated regularly on the Authority's website. The list of Friends of the President will include the name of the delegation, the topic on which it is working, meeting dates and deadlines, the type of interaction (e.g. videoconference, written comments, email or WhatsApp), 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 Council meetings in July 2025, the list will also include relevant details such as meeting dates, format, room numbers and any additional documents.

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