



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
24th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority
Item 9: Consideration and Adoption of the
Strategic Plan for the Authority for the Five -Year Period 2019–2023
Kingston, 23-27 July 2018

Mr. President,

The Strategic Plan for the Authority for the Five-Year Period 2019–2023 presents as a whole a vital way forward. The Holy See wishes to express best wishes to the Authority for its successful implementation, in particular in strengthening a “responsibilities-based” approach in its pursuit of the many initiatives identified in the Strategic Directions contained in the Strategic Plan.

In this respect, we would encourage the Authority to ensure that the rights of States and commercial enterprises do not remove the focus from the greater good of protecting our oceans and fostering their conservation. Every Strategic Direction should contribute to this ultimate goal by ensuring, *inter alia*, that all stakeholders practice environmental stewardship, transparency, due diligence and care in their activities, compliance and self-reporting of any non-compliance, as well as accountability for negligent or intentionally harmful actions.

My Delegation therefore hopes that in implementing the general statements of mission and direction, the Authority will seek to impose commensurate responsibilities on member States and on commercial parties undertaking deep seabed mining. These responsibilities should further solidify the Authority’s role in protecting human life and the environment, of biodiversity and the health of our ecosystem.

Finally, my Delegation would like to recall the Principles Governing the Seabed and the Ocean Floor, and the Subsoil Thereof, beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction, as they are ‘solemnly declared’ in resolution 25/2749 of the United Nations General Assembly. They remain relevant and fundamental in the implementation of the Authority’s Strategic Plan, in particular the first principle that “The seabed and ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (hereinafter referred to as the area), as well as the resources of the area, are the common heritage of mankind.”

Thank you, Mr. President.