

STATEMENT BY INDIA

On Item 8 (Dated 30.7.2024)

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL UNDER ARTICLE 166

Thank you, Mr. President. We express our appreciation for your leadership in conducting the work of the Assembly. We thank host country Jamaica for their excellent hospitality for this time and always. We join others in welcoming San Marino for becoming a party to the Convention. We welcome and thank the honourable President of Palau, Minister of Cook Islands and other leaders from the Pacific Islands for their presence in this Assembly meeting.

2. Mr. President, India represents in all the organs of the Authority and we assure you our commitment to work of the Authority. India has been designated in the category of 'Pioneer investor' having special interest. Our seabed exploration activities started during 1987 from the time of Preparatory Commission (PREPCOM) for carrying out developmental work for exploration and utilization of the polymetallic nodules in the Central India Ocean. Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Govt. of India entered into two contracts with the International Seabed Authority for exploration of Polymetallic nodules in the allotted area in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) and for exploration of Polymetallic sulphides in the Indian Ocean Ridges. We are the lone contractor for polymetallic nodules in the Indian Ocean. We thank the Authority for approval of plan of work in the recently concluded Council for Polymetallic sulphides exploration contract in the Carlsberg Ridge of the Indian ocean ridges.

3. India has always been a maritime civilization. India is surrounded by seas and oceans and have a long coastline. We understand the importance of oceans for the welfare of our people. We have a firm belief that the elixir of life is concealed in the oceans. Our ancient scriptures and literature talk about the gifts of the oceans including marine life. Our security and prosperity are linked to oceans. India is a strong proponent of the "Blue Growth" as a part of the long-term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors.

Mr President

4. We understand that at this juncture deep-sea mining has gained momentous value for consideration at several levels like geopolitical, societal and environmental forum etc. It is evident that one view or concern at multilateral level is the lack of sufficient scientific knowledge to evaluate environmental impact and development of ecofriendly technology related to deep sea mining of polymetallic nodules. It is our most acceptable and essential task at this moment to develop, gather, analyze and discuss the scientific and technological knowledge in a transparent manner. So, the exploration and exploratory mining activities of the contractors may continue as primary way for generating more knowledge and information needed to fill the gaps. In parallel, it is also imperative that Council must finalize a robust, stringent and scientific exploitation regulation ensuring protection and preservation of the marine environment based on the best available scientific knowledge of present time.

5. The Authority is extensively engaged with the task of developing regulations for the exploitation of deep-sea minerals since past many years. India as a state party and contractor is participating, supporting and contributing to this initiative.

6. Mr. President, India supports the doctrine of sustainable utilization of seabed mineral resources for humankind with full protection of marine environment. At this point we support the finalization of seabed minerals exploitation regulations for the Authority in a comprehensive way ensuring protection and preservation of the marine environment based on the best available scientific knowledge of the present time. India is of the view that the exploitation code should have a balance between the environmental and economic and technology development concerns and should safeguard the interest of all stakeholders including contractors. Finally, we stand for fully aligning our seabed activities within the provisions of United Nation Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNLOS) and the Agreement and also confirm strict compliance with the applicable exploration and eventual exploitation regulation.

7. Now, turning to the Secretary General annual report for 2023, we thank Secretary General and the secretariat for their valuable and outstanding contribution on behalf of the Authority. We note several remarkable achievements and fulfilling several commitments by the authority during the year 2023 - 24.

8. The first report ISBA/29/A/2 provides noteworthy updates and information on the status of the Convention and related legal instruments, the status of the Area, the status of contributions to the budget of the Authority, the status of contracts for exploration in the Area, a summary of the main outcomes of the previous session of the Authority.

9. It is important to understand the level of hard work and integrity executed by the Authority in maintaining 30 ongoing exploration contracts assessment of the annual reports and 5 years periodic reports through the hard work of the LTC. It is very important to record the compliance of all contracts with the rules and regulations and it is indicative of strong commitment of the contractors for more and more knowledge generation.

10. The efforts of Secretary General and Secretariat in establishing and continuing collaborations with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and several international organisation deserves appreciations.

11. The second report of the Secretary General ISBA/29/A/5 on Implementation of the action plan of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is also very commendable.

12. The presentation and the quality of the content giving exhaustive list of work done by the Secretary General and his team is praiseworthy. It has also drawn our attention to the significant progress made in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2019-2025 The implementation of the six strategic research priorities contained in the action plan for marine scientific research have been achieved to a great extent. The intent of advancing scientific knowledge and understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions, in the Area has been achieved along with the involvement of small island developing States and landlocked developing countries also through active participation in the workshops and scientific events. All the six strategic priorities have been at par with the contemporary development and have achieved a significant heights by the hard work of the Authority.

13. The mandated Marine Scientific Research MSR in the Area for the authority has made good progress through the implementing the strategic research priorities identified in the ISA MSR Action Plan in support of the UN Decade. The Global Call for Action to ensure the stewardship of the Area and its resources for the benefit of all humanity through deep-sea science, technology and innovation and India has joined with other countries. The contribution of ISA to achieve the 2030 Agenda and independent review commissioned in 2021 recognizes that ISA already contributed to 12 of the 17 SDGS and confirms the unique role of ISA.

14. The empowerment of women in the scientific programs and achieving their career goals is an excellent initiative. We have pledged for joining the ISA in the WIDSR program and provide all cooperation in the fulfilling the objective of the program. The initiatives of ISA empowerment of developing States including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to take full advantage of the possibilities open to them under UNCLOS and participation in the preparation of the three respective programmes of action is a great initiatives.

15. Many delegations have acknowledged several achievements of the Authority and in the interest of time we do not intent to repeat the same.

16. Finally, we acknowledge the remarkable achievements of the Authority over the last 30 years and finding its place at the center of international Ocean Governance architecture – and its vision for an organization that ensure the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area and more importantly, guarantee the exercise of their rights under UNCLOS including in relation to the exploration and exploitation of seabed minerals in the Area.

Thank you Mr. President.