



18 June 2020

1. The twenty-sixth session is still ongoing as it has been carried from 2020 over to 2021 to continue addressing the various items on the agenda of both the Assembly and the Council. While face-to-face meetings of both organs were originally scheduled to be held in July 2021, due to the t5Gq490.99it72/

The Council, in late 2020, approved a plan of work for exploration of polymetallic nodules by Blue Minerals Jamaica Limited, sponsored by Jamaica.² In March 2021, the Council decided to increase the amount of annual overhead charges to be paid by Contractors to \$80,000 starting from the year of 2022.³ And on 30 March 2021, the Council decided to extend by one year the terms of office of the current members of the Legal and Technical Commission, such that they will expire on 31 December 2022.⁴

3. In December 2020, the Assembly re-elected Michael W. Lodge for the second term as the Secretary-General.⁵ The Assembly also adopted the budget of the Authority fom0 gn6 Tf.get 5()on(y)-3()-34(f)12(o)-

¹ See the Joint letter from the President of the Assembly and the President of the Council at https://isa.org.jm/files/files/documents/Joint_Letter.pdf

² See ISBA/26/C/27/Rev.1.

³ See ISBA/26/C/28.

⁴ See ISBA/26/C/30.

⁵ See ISBA/26/A/16.

⁶ See ISBA/26/A/19.

⁷ See ISBA/26/A/20.

⁸ See ISBA/26/A/17.

⁹ See ISBA/26/A/18.

Odunton,¹⁰ former Secretary

environmental management system, and the form and calculation of an environmental performance

has developed an action plan to formalize and organize its contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.¹⁷ In this connection, a high-level webinar was organized in November 2020 to present the key components of the draft Action Plan, including the six strategic research priorities around which the Authority will mobilize its actions in a complementary and synergistic manner.¹⁸

15. Since the adoption of the action plan by the Assembly in December 2020, important progress has been made to proceed with its implementation. Emphasis has been placed on promoting dissemination, exchange and sharing of scientific data and deep-sea research outputs and increasing deep-sea literacy. As a result, in May 2021, the Authority has officially joined the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) network to serve as a node for the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS) of IOC-UNESCO. In so doing, the Authority became the first intergovernmental organization to serve as a node of OBIS, which clearly reflects the importance of the central role of the Authority in advancing our collective understanding of deep-sea ecosystems and biodiversity.

16. This synergy created between these two leading global databases is a very good example of the importance of establishing strategic partnerships to leverage complementary capacities, and networks to deliver transformative knowledge on the biodiversity of the seabed and to create a legacy of new data, tools and training that will facilitate the effective protection of the marine environment.

17. Another remarkable example of the importance given to foster and nurture strategic partnerships in support of the effective implementation of the Convention can be found in the sharing of bathymetric data collected by contractors in the context of their exploration contracts with the Authority with the International Hydrographic Organization. By facilitating this transfer of data and information, the Authority is directly contributing to the global initiative called Seabed 2030 aimed at expanding and enhancing mapping of the seafloor.

18. More fundamentally, significant development has also been made through the establishment of collaborative initiatives with States Parties, contractors, and other stakeholders to advance research related to the environmental effects of activities in the Area. Of particular interest is the recent progress made on standardizing and innovating methodologies for deep-sea biodiversity assessment, including taxonomic identification and description.

19. Since the adoption in December 2020 by the Assembly of its decision to implement a programmatic approach to capacity development,¹⁹ progress has been made for the development of a dedicated strategy which should be released by the end of the year. In the meantime, and pursuant to the decision of the Assembly, a group of National Focal Points for Capacity Development has been established. A key role for these national focal points is to facilitate dissemination at the national level of information on capacity development programmes and initiatives implemented by the

¹⁷ See ISBA/26/A/17.

¹⁸ <https://www.isa.org.jm/index.php/event/high-level-webinar-present-isas-draft-action-plan->

24. In accordance with article 156, paragraph 2, of the Convention all States Parties are, **ipso facto** members of the Authority. As of 15 June 2021, there are 168 members of the Authority. On the same date, there are 150 parties to the 1994 Agreement. On 29 March 2021, the Secretary-General sent out a letter to the remaining 18 members of the Authority that became parties to the Convention before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement but have yet to become parties to the 1994 Agreement. It is noted that Bosnia and Herzegovina deposited the instrument of accession to the 1994 Agreement on 26 May 2021 and the 1994 Agreement shall enter into force for Bosnia and Herzegovina on 25 June 2021. Therefore, there are 17 members need to take necessary steps to become parties to the 1994 Agreement. These are: Bahrain, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mali, Marshall Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Sudan.

25.

Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Niger, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Suriname, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

29. As of 15 June 2021 (same deadline for other funds mentioned below), the capital of the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area stood at \$3,543,567. The available fund stands at \$362,957.

30. As for the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of members of the Commission from developing countries and members of the Finance Committee from developing countries in the meetings of the Commission and of the Committee, the cumulative total of contributions to the fund amounted to \$1,221,882, including latest contribution that have been made by China (\$20,000), France (\$20,000), the Philippines (\$7,500) and DeepGreen Meals Inc. (\$15,000). Four cont

31. As for the voluntary trust fund to support the parti

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institucoon and policy framewok for the sound and sustainable management of marine mineral resources in the Area()1Since then, the project eteved the su pport of the Govern through the participatio of the Norwegian Agy for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The project was designed on the identification by P - delopmtnt needs. Acco()12(d)3(in)5(g)4(Iy, 74(-)JTJETQq0.0000088710595.32841.92reW*BT/F111.04Tf100122 and Kiribati h(marinesific earchand access of the eqsults of hsuch164()545(eqs)10(2019)). Two more

(Environmental management and monitoring of deep-sea activities) and the other with Tonga (benefit sharing).

34. The secretariat of the Authority has continued to collaborate with the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) in support of the preparation of the Fifth conference for the Least Developed Countries in Qatar (2021), the adoption of the UN Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries in September 2020, and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. As indicated above, this partnership also led to the development of the **^t}u v]v - ^ %o Z • CE Z _ %o CE** **Equally aimed at advancing women empowerment and leadership of women scientists from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.**²⁸

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC

Indian Ocean Rim Association

39. The secretariat of the Authority and the Indian Ocean Rim Association have completed the development of a draft memorandum of understanding to foster their cooperation and the text has been placed on the agenda of the Council of the Authority for its consideration and approval at its next face-to-face meeting in 2021.

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