

**Input for the 2025 High-level Political Forum  
International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

**Your assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.**

The international seabed area (the Area) and its mineral resources are the common heritage of humankind. Activities in the Area should be carried out for the benefit of humankind as a whole, ensuring the protection of the marine environment.

The ocean is facing numerous pressures, with climate change and pollution from land-based activities being the most challenging.

There are increasing disparities between countries, particularly in STEM fields. Limited financing and access to capacity development opportunities have disproportionately hindered some developing countries from effectively participating in marine activities and global ocean governance. Notably, women from developing States continue to face barriers to participating in deep-sea scientific research.

Several international institutions and processes address ocean-related challenges. Their synergy and coordination need to be streamlined with respect to their mandates and responsibilities. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides the overarching framework for activities related to the conservation and use of oceans and their resources. The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), adopted in 2023, also offers the opportunity to build on the existing work of institutions and processes relevant to ocean governance, such as the International Seabed Authority (the Authority).

**Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.**

The first is the regulation of exploration activities in the Area. The Authority has adopted regulations on prospecting and exploration for related mineral resources. A solid multilateral regulatory framework has guaranteed the protection and sustainable use of the deep sea and the prevention of unregulated activities.

The second is marine scientific research (MSR). Since the adoption of the Action Plan for MSR, the Authority has organized 29 dedicated events, securing the participation of 879 experts with a quarter of participants from developing countries. From 2020 to 2023, its contractors reported 431 peer-reviewed publications across 121 journals.

The Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SSKI) has made important progress in focusing on deep-

sea biodiversity scientific research. In addition to identify new species across diverse deep-sea habitats, SSKI has developed crucial scientific tools aiding in species identification and biodiversity assessments. SSKI has trained young scientists from developing countries and has produced knowledge products aimed at informing policymakers about environmental DNA and establishing robust environmental baselines in the deep sea.

The third is capacity development. Since 1994, over 1,000 individuals have benefited from its capacity development initiatives. In 2022, the Authority adopted a capacity development strategy guided by the priority needs of developing States. Women's empowerment has been a central pillar of its capacity development programmes. 21 of the Authority's 22 exploration contractors pledges to allocate 50 per cent of their training placements to women wherever possible. Between July 2023 and January 2025, 45 per cent of the 180 placements offered under this commitment were awarded to women. The S.H.E. (See Her Exceed) Global Mentorship Programme launched in 2023 also facilitates the personal growth and career advancement of women scientists from developing States.

**Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.**

Example 1: As activities progress in the Area, the Authority is working to develop regulations for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. A consolidated draft of the exploitation regulations was issued during the twenty-ninth session on 16 February 2024. The outcome of this formulating process will ensure the sustainable development of mineral resources in the Area and the effective protection of the marine environment at the same time.

Example 2: Since 2018, the Finance Committee (FC) has been working on the development of rules, regulations and procedures on the equitable sharing of benefits derived from activities in the Area as required by the UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement. In July 2023, the FC considered a draft proposal for the establishment of a Common Heritage Fund, which received support from the Council and the Assembly. They invited the FC to continue working on the equitable distribution formulas and the Common Heritage Fund for the equitable sharing of financial benefits derived from activities in the Area.

Example 3: During the twenty-seventh session in 2022, the decision was made to develop binding environmental threshold values. The objective is to contribute substantially to establishing measures to ensure effective protection of the marine environment under the provisions of UNCLOS and to set measurable requirements with regard to levels of harm from activities in the Area, including the maximum level of harm that can be considered acceptable. The work is led by the Legal and Technical Commission and supported scientifically and technically by an intersessional expert group. Established in November 2023, the intersessional expert group is tasked with providing inputs on three main areas:

(a) toxicity, (b) turbidity and settling of resuspended sediments and (c) underwater noise and light pollution. The expert group will produce a research report on related areas for consideration by the Legal and Technical Commission.

**Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

To support the implementation of the Political Declaration of the 2023 SDG Summit and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, in discharging its mandate and responsibilities, the work of the Authority focuses on

- facilitating the discussions and adoption of the exploitation regulations.

In addition to formulating the regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, the organs of the Authority are also working on developing certain standards and guidelines to support the implementation of the regulations. The standards will be legally binding on contractors and the Authority, whereas the guidelines will be recommendatory in nature.

- ensuring effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from exploration and exploitation activities.

In addition to developing binding environmental threshold values, the Authority has established an environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, which encompasses nearly 2,000,000 km<sup>2</sup> of areas of particular environmental interest. The Authority is currently developing regional environmental management plans for the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the Northwest Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

- promoting and encouraging marine scientific research and capacity development.

The Authority continues its efforts to promote marine scientific research and capacity development, facilitating effective participation of developing States in exploration and exploitation activities in the Area. For example, a global call to action was launched at the margins of the SDGs Summit held in New York in 2023 to ensure the stewardship of the Area and its resources for the benefit of all humanity. The call emphasized the need for increased investment in deep-sea science, technology and innovation. By July 2024, this initiative garnered support from 29 signatories, including 16 Member States, three scientific institutions and nine contractors.

**Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.**

- Continue the effective implementation of UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement to ensure the realization of the regime of the Area for the benefit of humankind.
- Encourage international cooperation to establish and implement robust regulations for the effective and sustainable management of deep-sea mineral resources based on the best available scientific knowledge, ensuring that activities are carried out for the benefit of humankind as a whole and the effective protection of the marine environment.
- Continue promoting deep-sea scientific research and technology transfer through the implementation of the Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of developing countries for effective participation in the management of activities in the Area.