Statement on behalf of the African Group

At the Commemorative Ceremony of the Thirtieth Session of the International Seabed Authority

Kingston, Jamaica,
23 July 2025

Mr. President
Madam Secretary-General of the ISA
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

1. On behalf of the African Group, I have the honour to extend **heartfelt congratulations** to the International Seabed Authority on reaching this important milestone, the **30th anniversary** of its establishment.

2. We also commend the Secretary-General, **Madam Leticia Carvalho**, and the Secretariat for organizing this distinguished high-level commemoration. Madam Secretary-General's historic election as the **first woman**, the **first Latin American**, and the **first oceanographer** to lead the Authority marks a pivotal moment. It reinforces the ISA's commitment to **inclusivity**, **transformative leadership**, and **hope** for a better and universal ISA

3. We equally commend the **host country, Jamaica**, for the warmth and hospitality extended to all delegations overtime. Jamaica's steadfast support of the ISA over the past three decades is widely acknowledged. From the Government to the people of Jamaica, who are perhaps the only citizens in the world who are adeptly familiar the word "Seabed", we express our gratitude for being such generous custodians of this international institution.

Excellencies,

4. This commemorative moment is also an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to a **rules-based international order** grounded in the principles of the **United Nations Charter**, **international law**, and **multilateralism**. These enduring principles form the bedrock of the **United Nations**

Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), rightly referred to as the **"Constitution of our Oceans."** UNCLOS anchors the ISA's legal mandate and institutional authority as the body entrusted with the governance of the **Area** and its mineral resources, which are **the Common Heritage of Humankind**.

5. This foundational principle, unique in international law, reminds us that the deep seabed belongs to **all humanity**: not to one nation, nor one generation, but to the global community and posterity. Upholding this principle today demands that we ensure **equitable benefit-sharing**, **meaningful participation of developing states,** including the operationalization of the **Enterprise**, and **capacity-building**.

6. The African Group reaffirms the importance of the ISA's **dual mandate**: to both **promote the orderly development** of deep-sea mineral resources, and to **ensure the effective protection** of the marine environment. These twin obligations must be pursued in full complementarity. The protection of biodiversity, marine ecosystems, and the rights of future generations must be upheld alongside the goal of sustainable economic development.

7. Africa's contributions to the work of the ISA are substantial and enduring. From the earliest negotiations of UNCLOS, African states championed the idea of the deep seabed as a **global common,** following the historic introduction of the idea by **Ambassador Arvid Pardo of Malta** to the United Nations of the principle of the Common Heritage of Humankind.

8. We are proud that Africa played a vital role in shaping the legal framework of the ISA, with African diplomats among the architects of the common heritage regime.

9. We recall with particular pride the service of the late **Mr. Nii Allotey Odunton of Ghana**, who served with distinction as Secretary-General of the ISA from 2008 to 2016. His leadership helped consolidate the institutional strength of the Authority, and his legacy lives on in the ISA Museum that proudly bears his name.

10. We take this opportunity to also acknowledge the valuable contributions of the former Secretary-General of the Authority, **Mr. Satya Nandan** and **Michael W. Lodge**.

Excellencies,

11. African experts, legal scholars, and scientists continue to serve in key capacities within the Authority, including in the **Legal and Technical Commission** and other expert bodies. We have also deepened our engagement through national and regional initiatives. The launch of the **ISA-Egypt Joint Training and Research Centre in Alexandria**, and the upcoming **African Deep-Sea Diplomacy Academy in Cameroon**, are two such examples that speak to Africa's commitment to **capacity-building, marine science, and inclusive ocean governance**.

12. We also look forward to the **finalization of the Memorandum of Understanding between the African Union and the ISA**, which will formalize cooperation between our institutions on matters of **seabed governance**, **capacity development**, and the **blue economy**. This partnership reflects our shared vision for sustainable ocean development and the centrality of Africa's voice in global maritime affairs.

13. As the ISA continues its work toward adopting the **Mining Code**, the African Group urges that our negotiations remain faithful to the principles of **equity**, **environmental stewardship**, and the **Common Heritage of Humankind**.

14. Africa stands ready to contribute constructively to this endeavour. We remain committed to the vision of an ISA that serves all humankind, especially those traditionally excluded from the benefits of technological and economic progress.

15. Let us mark this anniversary not only by honouring the past, but by pledging renewed purpose for the future. May the next thirty years of the ISA be guided by the same spirit of **solidarity, sustainability, and shared responsibility** that gave rise to its founding.

Thank you and Happy Birthday ISA!