



1 November 2021

To:

1. H.E. Rear Admiral (rtd.) Md. Khurshed Alam
President of the Council, 26th Session of the International Seabed Authority
2. H.E. Ambassador Denys Wibaux
President of the Assembly, 26th Session of the International Seabed Authority

Dear Excellencies,

With this letter, the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI) hereby expresses our concern at the proposal to hold physical meetings, announced by press release on 17 September 2021. Specifically, the proposal to hold an ISA Annual Session consisting of a Council meeting (6-10 December 2021) and an Assembly meeting (13-15 December 2021).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting travel restrictions, and the global inequitable vaccine distribution means it will be difficult, and in some cases impossible, for many delegates to attend this Session. Additionally, a physical meeting could be dangerous for delegates. At the time of writing, Jamaica has a 7-day average of nearly 200 new COVID-19 cases, a death toll of around 13 people per day, and a 12% vaccination rate. Many countries currently consider Jamaica as a “high-risk” country, with recommendations to avoid travel, especially given the uncertainties and high costs around access to healthcare should one become ill. Adequate representation will also be challenging given the restrictions of two delegates per Member State delegation and one per Observer delegation, as well as the current limit of 50 persons at events, creating an additional burden on those present.

Now more than ever, it is important to ensure inclusion and transparency at ISA meetings as decisions related to the common heritage of (hu)mankind will have global implications and all voices should be heard. Ensuring safety and opportunity to attend these meetings are important. At this time, a solely physical meeting would not guarantee this, so we humbly suggest postponement. In lieu of this, we suggest enabling hybrid participation with both virtual and in-person options for State and Observer delegations.

We ask that you please make this letter available on the Council and Assembly websites.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S. Gollner'.

Dr. Sabine Gollner

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Patricia Esquete'.

Dr. Patricia Esquete

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Diva Amon'.

Dr. Diva Amon

Co-Leads, DOSI Minerals Working Group

cc: Office of the Secretary General, International Seabed Authority