

27 October 2021

Mr Michael Lodge  
Secretary-General  
International Seabed Authority  
Kingston, Jamaica

cc: Rear Admiral (Retd.) Md. Khurshed Alam, President of the Council

Ambassador Denys Wibaux, President of the Assembly

Dear Secretary-General,

We, the undersigned Observers to the International Seabed Authority and other civil society organizations, write to you to express our serious concern at the proposal to hold a physical meeting, announced by press release on 20 September 2021. We note the letter was not communicated directly to Observers by the Secretariat.

The proposal is to hold a Council meeting from 6-10 December 2021; and a meeting of the ISA Assembly from 13-15 December 2021.

Our concerns stem from three effects of the proposal:

1. It will be difficult, and in cases, impossible for many delegates to attend due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global inequitable distribution of vaccines, and due to restrictions in delegates' own countries and in transit countries.
2. It will be unnecessarily risky for delegates to attend the meeting. Jamaica, as we write, has a seven-day average of around 200 new cases a day, a death toll of around 15 per day and a vaccination rate of 12%. The United States [Center for Disease Control](#) lists Jamaica at Level 4 and recommends avoiding travel to Jamaica. Therefore, it is inevitable that some delegations will be unable to attend the meetings and will therefore not be represented. There are no proposals for virtual participation of delegations.
3. The restriction of two delegates per Member delegation and one per Observer delegation will be an additional burden on the delegations that can attend, and necessarily limits the ability of a member or observer to the ISA to constitute its delegation with the experts it deems necessary.

Moreover, we believe that the COVID-19 security measures onsite, mentioned in the [Information Note on the preliminary modalities for in-person meetings of the Council and the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority](#), are insufficient for effective prevention of spreading the virus (e.g. lack of requirements for a certificate as proof of vaccination or of a recent negative test).

Holding a physical meeting at this time is out of step with the growing calls for more inclusion in global decision-making, especially as the decisions to be under consideration are related to the common heritage of (hu)mankind. The Authority has a responsibility to postpone any in-person meetings until such meetings can be safely held and delegates from all Member States and Observers can attend.

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

Yours sincerely

#### Observer Organizations



#### Other Civil Society Organizations



