



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Inaugural ISA Appointment for Ireland

Ireland has been elected to the Council of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) for the first time.

The appointment was made at the 29th assembly of the ISA, held recently in Kingston (Jamaica).

Ireland Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Micheál Martin – who is also the country’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence – said Ireland would be a voice for:

- upholding international law
- protection of the marine environment
- science-based decision-making
- sustainable development

“We will also advocate for high standards of institutional governance, transparency and accountability,” he said.

“Ireland will take its seat on the ISA Council at a time when our oceans are already facing significant challenges, including habitat destruction, pollution, unsustainable fishing practices, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and ocean warming.

“We will continue to oppose deep-sea mining until we have sufficient scientific knowledge and a robust regulatory framework to ensure that it can be done responsibly, in accordance with international law.”

In July 2023 the Irish Government announced its support for a precautionary pause of deep-sea mining, advocating for a robust regulatory framework and sufficient scientific knowledge to allow for informed decision-making.

ISA Role

It is understood the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea established the ISA to regulate mineral resources exploration and exploitation of the international seabed, which falls beyond national jurisdiction.

Comprising 36 states, it is responsible for developing regulations on deep-sea mining, approving exploration and exploitation contract applications, and overseeing the implementation of contracts.

To date the ISA has only authorised exploration activities. However, it has been noted there have been recent efforts by some states and mining companies to accelerate moves towards the commencement of commercial deep-sea mining, “despite ongoing regulatory framework negotiations and significant scientific knowledge gaps regarding deep-sea ecosystems and the potential mining impacts”.

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