

WORKSHOP FOR THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF AFRICA'S DEEP SEABED RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF AFRICA'S
BLUE ECONOMY

Closing remarks – 3 June 2021

Dr. Rezah Badal, Director General, Prime Minister's Office, Department for Continental Shelf,
Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, Mauritius

Excellencies,

Friends and colleagues,

Fellow Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored today to address you this closing remark on behalf of the Government of Mauritius and the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration & Exploration. It is indeed with great satisfaction that we have been associated with the International Seabed Authority together with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, to support this Workshop for the promotion of Sustainable Development of Africa's Seabed Resources (ADSR) and its Ocean/Blue Economy.

As you have been apprised, the ADSR project is implemented by the ISA and the African Union. The project builds on ISA's and the African Mineral Development Centre of UNECA commitment to foster international and regional cooperation for the Sustainable Development of Africa's Blue Economy. It aims at raising awareness among African States on the subject of sustainable development of the Continental Shelf and more precisely on the challenges for seabed mineral in the Area.

Another key component of the ASDR project concerns the secondment of national experts from African States to be based at the ISA Secretariat. This initiative which is certainly most welcome, shall build on existing platform to impart technical skills on Deep sea matters to our nationals. As we understood, this was to occur in 2020, but unfortunately world COVID pandemic came as unpredicted and subsequently delayed the process. We are hoping for the world health situation to improve to permit such exchange.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This workshop, as you understood, is the third of a series five that brought together key stakeholders and experts in the field. We were privileged to have representatives from our neighboring friends namely Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Tanzania, Seychelles and Somalia. We were also happy to have representatives from all walks that including governments official as well as international, regional and national bodies.

Right on Day 1, we were immersed into the complexity of issues pertinent to Seabed Mineral Mining. However, I must say that the topics were well calibrated and perfectly scheduled that took us gradually to the Deep.

At the very beginning, we have seen and listen to the provision of a governance structure for seabed mineral in the Area. The Law of Sea Convention provides for a three tiered structure or organs, for the establishment of the ISA. The roles and powers of these organs of the ISA have been defined and provide a clear mechanism for member states to partake in the seabed mineral activities in the Area. Indeed, today's workshop is one among these numerous activities.

We heard about Africa's mining vision and its contribution towards deep sea mineral exploration. My colleagues from the Department for Continental Shelf share with you the case of Mauritius. Indeed, I must admit that Mauritius has had a very prudent approach to seabed mineral activities. I recall my first acquaintance with ISA some years, or at least a decade ago. We had the privilege to be introduced to the growing activities of ISA by none other than his Excellency Mr Michael Lodge. This has led us to undertake our own capacity building and initiate our work on the development of an appropriate legal and institutional framework for Seabed Mineral Activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As explained earlier, Mauritius is now in the process of finalizing two bills for the Seabed Mineral Exploration & Exploitation: one for its EEZ and another one for the ABNJ. I must say that Mauritius has still a lot to undertake in order to kick start activities pertaining to the Exploration of Seabed Mineral. As it is realised, Deep Sea Mineral Exploration is a matter of high technical complexity and involves multi-disciplinary fields of expertise.

We also realised that, Mauritius, as every member states will have to scrupulously adhere to international obligations as provided under the UNCLOS and ISA regulations. We delved into the issues pertinent to making due diligence and on the questions concerning state liabilities. These are matters that have to be judiciously considered and addressed by each party. Fortunately, much work have been carried out into these aspects and certainly contained vital elements when it comes to decision making. We are also aware of the tedious efforts and research that have been made in matters pertinent to Environment Impact Assessment. I had, personally, the privilege to participate in ISA's work on the development of Regional Environmental Management Plans (REMPs). I understand a first REMP is now in place for the CCZ region as we heard yesterday.

Undoubtedly, ISA is continuing its efforts to educate all concerned stakeholders concerning in all the fronts, be it in terms of Environmental Impact assessments, its process and access to deep data that have been set up either through historic surveys or planned Marine Scientific Research.

However, as we understood, such undertaking is two-folds namely: The Exploration and the Exploitation phase. The framework for Exploration of the Area has been established through the various conventions, codes and rules and regulations. We shall now look forward to ascertain that similar equitable framework are in place for the Exploitation phase.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to conclude here with a small African Saying: Masuwa ekufaka libongo etikalaka (in Lingala, Congo) which translates as: A boat will always have its destination as long as the port is there. In fact we are all embarked on the same boat and our port is for humankind to reap this benefit as a whole. In this difficult days, as COVID is dictating us a new norm, we can only support each other in our undertaking. Seabed Mineral Exploration is one such journey we all have to take together and come up with the least injury.

I am Confident that the Authority and its important partners will lead us cautiously on this way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Friends & Colleagues,

Finally let me convey my deepest gratitude and thanks to all of you who has made this workshop a success and contributed to raising the awareness for the Africa Deep Sea Resources project in supporting the Sustainable Development of our Ocean Economy. Again I would to thank everyone: Excellences, our Ambassador in New York, Respected Officials, Friends

and colleagues, our dear Norwegian friend, Harald, my own staff and last but not the least Excellency Michael Lodge and all his wonderful staff.

Thank you until next time, Insha Allah.