

Statement

on behalf of the African Group

by

His Excellency, Ambassador Olatokunboh Kamson,

Nigerian High Commissioner,

Permanent Representative to the International

Seabed Authority

in commemoration

**of the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the
International Seabed Authority**

during its 20th Session

Kingston, Jamaica

22 July 2014

The Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller

Minister of Foreign Affairs,

H. E. President of the Assembly, Ambassador Luis Da Costa,

President of the Council, Ambassador Tommo Monthe,

Secretary – General of the International Seabed Authority, H. E. Mr. Nii Allortey Odunton,

Permanent Representatives of States Parties,

Distinguished Delegations

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour and privilege to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group in my capacity as its Chair on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the International Seabed Authority. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for the hospitality accorded us since our arrival. Similarly, I congratulate all States Parties to the Convention on this great occasion.

Mr. President

Please allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the 20th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority. I

would like to assure you of our full cooperation and support for your efforts to guide this session's work to a successful conclusion.

I am also pleased to convey the African Group's appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency, Ambassador Vladimir Mikhailovich Polenov and his country, the Russian Federation for his commitment and hard work as President of the 19th Session of the Assembly.

We also take this opportunity, through you Mr. President, to thank our host, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Government and people of Jamaica for the hospitality and the arrangements that they have put in place for the success of this session.

Mr President,

The African Group is pleased to join 166 States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the International Seabed Authority during this 20th Session.

The African Group has taken note of the opening statement by the President of the Assembly, the Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller and all those who spoke after and made important remarks.

We also wish to recognize the contributions of the indefatigable pioneers, both dead and alive, that led to the establishment of the Authority and have sustained it to what it is today. We commend their

visionary leadership and pledge our unflinching support and contributions to efforts towards facilitating the achievement of the goals of the Authority and ensuring that the whole humanity benefit from the Common Heritage of Mankind.

In same vein, the African Group recognizes the quality leadership provided by the Secretary-General of the Authority, Mr. Nii Allotey Odunton, a distinguished African and pride of the continent. We appreciate his personal contributions and the works by all the members of Staff of the Secretariat over the past years in maintaining the Seabed Authority as an effective and relevant International organization within the global system. We recognize the fact that the Authority is still a “**work in progress**” and hope that with the support of all, the Authority will be able to harness the potentials of the seabed for the benefit of mankind without jeopardizing the security of the marine ecosystem and the coastal environment.

Mr. President

The International Seabed Authority is an autonomous international organization established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Authority is the organization through which States Parties to the Convention organize and control activities in the Area, particularly with a view to administering the resources of the Area, in accordance with the regime for the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil

thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction established in Part XI and the Agreement.

At this auspicious time of transition from exploration to exploitation stage, the Group welcomes every efforts and initiatives that would facilitate the development of the Mining Code for contractors that are ready and willing to progress to the next stage of exploitation. The Group supports, and is willing to be a part of all efforts by the Authority to prepare for this inevitability. The Group urges the contractors to carry out their obligations with utmost dedication, and sense of and make available all necessary information and data that would aid the work of the Secretariat and the LTC toward rapid progress of the Authority.

In conclusion, Mr President

The Authority came into existence on 16 November 1994, upon the entry into force of the 1982 Convention. The Authority became fully operational as an autonomous international organization in June 1996, when it took over the premises and facilities in Kingston, Jamaica previously used by the United Nations Kingston Office for the Law of the Sea. Alongside the dramatic increase in activity in the Area, the year 2014 marks a significant event in the life of the International Seabed Authority. The deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction, referred to as the "Area" in the Convention, is governed by Part XI of the Convention which establishes the deep seabed as the common heritage of mankind.¹ In a nutshell Part XI establishes a regime, complete with an

¹ Article 1(1) of the Convention defines the "Area" as "the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction". See Article 136 which determines the Area to be the common heritage of mankind. To avoid confusion between "area" beyond national jurisdiction, marine protected "areas" and "Area", I use the "deep seabed" and not the "Area" throughout the article.

international organisation, the International Seabed Authority, to ensure that the benefits from the exploitation of the resources on the deep seabed are shared by all humanity and by future generations.²

In this regard, we note that in spite of the relevant provision of the Convention of the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement that special provision be made for developing countries in view of their technological deficiency. Although some Africans have benefitted from training programmes arising from contracts. However, no African State has been able to participate in the 26 contracts for exploration in the Area. We therefore urge our developed partners to assist to ensure that Africa also take advantage in this process.

I thank you for your attention.

² See especially Article 130 of the Convention.