

**STATEMENT BY
THE MOST HONOURABLE PORTIA SIMPSON MILLER, ON MP
PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA
AT THE
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY
MARKING ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY**

Tuesday, 22nd July 2014, 10:00 AM

ISA Headquarters, Downtown Kingston

SALUTATIONS

- President of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority;
- Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority;
- Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs in the United Nations;
- President , Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea;
- , Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for the Law of the Sea and first Secretary General of the Authority;
- Judge Jose Luis Jesus, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea;
- Professor Hasjim Djalal, former member of the Indonesian Delegation to the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea;
- President of the Seabed Disputes Chamber;
- Ambassador of Zambia to South Korea;
- President of the International Seabed Authority Council – 2004;
- Chairmen of the Regional Groups;
- Delegates to the 20th Session of the ISA;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

I welcome you all, on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, to this Twentieth Session of the International Seabed Authority and, in particular, this commemorative Session.

It is indeed a pleasure to be here again to share in this Special Commemorative Session and I thank the Secretary-General for his gracious invitation.

When I last came here, exactly two years ago, for the Special Session to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Opening for Signature of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, I mentioned the pride and honour Jamaica felt on that occasion.

Today, I am again delighted to be participating in this Special Session to mark the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of this august body.

The conclusion of the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea** (UNCLOS) in 1982 is undoubtedly one of the most significant accomplishments for the United Nations, and for mankind in the quest for a just and equitable regime for ocean governance and the sustainable development of our oceans and seas.

The Convention was born out of a *“desire to settle, in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation, all issues relating to the Law of the Sea.*

In spite of the doubts expressed during the sixties and seventies, this Convention has become the Constitution of the Seas and Oceans.

Many, then, were unconvinced that there was any truth that the seas and oceans, which make up 71 percent of our earth’s surface and 97 per cent of this blue planet’s water resources, contained boundless wealth.

Today, even with 95 percent of the underwater world still unexplored, that doubt has been put to rest.

This concept of the seas and the resources of the seabed and ocean floor as the *“common heritage of mankind”* is a ‘fathomable’ concept put forward by the late visionary of the oceans,

Ambassador Dr. Arvid Pardo of Malta; which remains a significant breakthrough for international law. I commend his remarkable foresight.

There have been others who, like Ambassador Pardo, crafted the convention which created the organisation we commemorate today, and are inscribed in the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea** - Hall of Fame.

We are fortunate to have in our midst today:

- His Excellency Tommy Koh
- Professor Hasjim Djalal, and
- Mr. Jean-Pierre Levy

Let us not forget Jamaica's own son of the soil the late **Dr. Kenneth Rattray** or **Mr. Lennox Ballah** of Trinidad and Tobago and other representatives from the Caribbean Community who recognised that *"rules of right indeed and always ought to be made to triumph over the rule of might"*.

The Convention they forged forms the basis for our declaration of status as a state within an archipelago and the delimitation of our boundaries with some of our neighbouring states.

Mr. President,

The Government and people Jamaica are especially proud to be a part of this 20th commemorative anniversary. In the 1990s when the negotiations of Part XI of the Convention covering deep seabed mining were viewed as untenable and too optimistic, Jamaica was among that group of keenly interested developing countries at the time, towards its adoption in 1994.

Brazil and Indonesia shared our belief in the Convention and also worked tirelessly with Jamaica, alongside developed country partners. Today, 166 States Parties have accepted the Convention as their guide for the conduct of marine activities.

We proudly recall the ceremonial opening of the **Seabed Authority** on 16th November 1994 when Jamaica's then Prime Minister, the Most Honourable P.J. Patterson, shared the platform with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali and declared the Convention to be the result of *“visionary courage and legendary perseverance of the negotiators”*.

It was a remarkable feat and we were understandably humbled as a relatively young nation to play such an active role in the creative process of legislation covering the Law of the Sea and the seabed. We were even more delighted to be graced with the establishment of the seat of the Authority on the shores of this our island home.

The ISA is the first and only example of a United Nations institution with an explicit mandate covering the last global commons, the oceans and the seabed. This makes the **International Seabed Authority** a radical establishment that is as vital today as it was 20 years ago.

Throughout the ensuing 20 years, we have gained significant scientific and technological insight into the value of the seas and oceans and their resources to our existence and well-being. The twenty-year mark, therefore, presents an ideal occasion to pause and review the contributions that the institutions established as a result of the Convention have made to the evolution, reformation and growth of the law of the sea.

We must also assess how these institutions**The International Seabed Authority, The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf** can best help us face existing and emerging challenges as we aim for sustainable growth and development.

Mr President, the sound management and governance of the mineral resources of the seabed; the sharing of the benefits to be derived from the mining of those minerals; the sustainability of fishery resources; and the development of new techniques for underwater exploitation of oil resources and pollution control are critical issues that we must continue to address.

The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has considered a large number of submissions from States Parties and provided the necessary recommendations, which will

undoubtedly serve to protect the harmonious relations between and among neighbouring states. The case workload of the **International Tribunal** has also been increasing steadily.

Mr. President,

Developing countries stand to benefit from the specialised expertise the Tribunal offers in helping them solve disputes that arise in interpreting and applying the Convention.

These two bodies along with the **International Seabed Authority**, the triumvirate of the seas, assist in simplifying the complex operations many coastal states require to define their space. They have assisted greatly in claims to the economic resources to be found in territorial waters or in settling disputes of a political nature. Over the last twenty years real results have been delivered.

The elaboration and implementation of the Authority's first set of regulations for mining the deep seabed will only add further dimension to the work of the Authority.

I commend the Authority for its strong focus on environmental protection and conservation of the living non-renewable resources in its area of jurisdiction in recognition of the entire seabed as a complex living breathing ecosystem that supports life.

A healthy seabed is necessary and especially important for island states such as ours in the Caribbean which depend on the quality of the natural environment and derive much of their economic growth from the use of natural resources.

In this **International Year of Small Island Developing States** and in anticipation of the **Third International Conference** to be held in Samoa in September, it is critical that the governance of the oceans and environmental protection be strengthened.

I would like to place on record once again, commendation and appreciation to Secretary-General and his staff for their diligence and hard work.

Mr. President, the work of this important 20th Session builds on the work we have continued to do since 1994 to deliver the long-term plan to build a stronger Authority through the

attainment of universal membership of the Convention; one that responds to the needs of Member States as it works towards the protection and utilisation of the resources of the seabed for the benefit of the global community.

We meet, therefore, for both celebration and serious reflection as we examine what the next 20 years will bring in terms of growth and positive change in the goals and objectives set for the Authority.

The next few years will be crucial for the Authority which must recognise the critical and important role it can play in supporting the region's, and indeed that of **Small Island developing States'** development objectives, with the oceans being man's final resource-laden frontier.

Diplomacy of the seas, investing in training, especially cross training and capacity building that can open doors and create development opportunities, can make the Authority a strong and unified voice in the wider universe of the policy of the seas.

Mr. President,

As part of this commitment to training, Jamaica established the **Caribbean Maritime Institute** which began as a partnership with the Norwegian Government thirty years ago and provides maritime education and training at the tertiary level.

The Institute provides a critical service in training prospective workers for the logistics hub, a key plank in Jamaica's growth and development strategy.

Our oceans and seas have, for centuries, borne vessels that have carried both treasures and trials. Since the ancient of days, peoples of our world have followed the currents of the oceans deep and have caused its history to be written.

From aqua to deep azure, the ocean's blues hold secrets and rich resources fathoms deep. It has fallen to mankind to protect, preserve and regulate this shared resource. This is a phenomenal responsibility – one we in Jamaica take seriously.

On this, the twentieth anniversary of the **International Seabed Authority** I congratulate all who have seen to its formation, preservation and advancement.

Let us continue to work towards our objectives, united through a sense of urgency and purpose, conscious of the mantle that has been passed on to us and looking to the future that must be preserved for generations to come.

I thank you.