

**International Seabed Authority
Kingston, Jamaica
21st Session
14 July, 2015**

**Opening Statement by President of the Council
Ambassador Peter Thomson**

Your Excellencies,

Secretary-General Odunton,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for the honour you have given me to preside over the Council at this the 21st Session of the International Seabed Authority. I assure you of my dedication to the task of guiding the affairs of Council over the days ahead towards a productive outcome.

At the outset, may I thank the Secretariat for their diligent preparations for the 21st Session, without which we would no doubt be closer to the seabed than we might wish. I would also take this early opportunity to once again express our deepest appreciation to the Government and People of Jamaica for their warm hospitality.

Before outlining the work before us over the next two weeks, I would like to place our deliberations within the context of the momentous events that are occurring in the world this year; events which, depending on their outcomes, will inescapably shape the world in which our children must live. The landmark Climate Change conference, to be held in Paris in early December, the so-called COP21, will result in international commitments that may or may not be sufficient to contain the effects of Climate Change at sustainably existential levels.

Meanwhile, our nations are at this time gathered together in Addis Ababa at the Financing for Development conference, whose outcome will set the patterns for the funding of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The

agenda itself, this action-oriented, universally-applicable, global development agenda, will be adopted when our leaders meet at a Summit to be held in September at the United Nations in New York. Thereafter the agenda will serve as the blueprint for humanity's development endeavours right through to the year 2030.

The centrepiece of the Development Agenda will be the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, painstakingly hammered out by the international community these last two years. Achieve these goals by 2030, and we can be confident of a sustainable future for our species; fail at them, and our future on this planet will be in jeopardy.

It is plain for all to see, that the seventeen goals are intimately intertwined, and that every one of them must be faithfully pursued if the others are to succeed. This observation obliges me to bring Council's particular attention to the contents of Sustainable Development Goal 14, or SDG14 as it is known, for it goes to the heart of the responsibilities of the International Seabed Authority. SDG14 calls for us all to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development." Amongst a range of targets, it gives us specific goals related to marine pollution, management of marine ecosystems and the conservation of marine protected areas. It further commits us to ensuring the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me emphasize that the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be universal and must be so if it is to succeed. It stems from the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, when all nations agreed on "the future we want", which is essentially that of a just and sustainable way of life on Planet Earth. And so it is within this global context of equity, universality and sustainability that we begin our deliberations at the Council this year, here in this Authority vested with the management of over half of the planet's surface, the seabed that we call the Area. And this Council can never escape the reality that the seabed holds up the ocean, that it has the ocean in its grip and that these two vast elements of our world are inextricably linked one to one. This Council should never put aside the knowledge that the ocean, and its magnificent myriads of biodiversity, of itself know of no man-made borders, and that our stewardship of the Area gives us high responsibilities for the health of the ocean, the breathing lung

of our planet, and all its wondrous content, the great heritage of mankind, held in common amongst us all.

Neither can this Council ignore the warnings of science, captured in last year's report by the Global Ocean Commission with the conclusion that our oceans and seas are in trouble. The Commission found that, "benign neglect by the majority, and active abuse by the minority, have fueled a cycle of decline. No single body shoulders responsibility for ocean health, and an absence of accountability is characterized by blind exploitation of resources and a willful lack of care."

Never let it be said that we here at the International Seabed Authority have been guilty of this characterization. We must be able at all times to stand, hand on heart, and affirm we have been true to the principles and purposes of the Law of the Sea, which of themselves are explicit on the subject of environmental responsibilities.

SDG14 will bring accountability to all organisations and agencies that play a role in the sustainability of ocean's health. Thus, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates, this Council's stewardship must be ever above reproach.

And so to the work before us in this 21st Session. It will be recalled that during the 20th Session, Council, in its decision relating to the summary report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission, requested the Commission as a matter of urgency to formulate draft procedures and criteria for applications for extensions of contracts for exploration in the Area. The LTC's recommendations on this matter have been duly submitted and we shall be considering them under item 12 of our agenda.

During the 20th Session, Council also requested the Commission, as a matter of priority, to continue its work on the draft regulations governing exploitation of seabed minerals in the Area, and to make available to all members of the Authority a draft framework for the regulation of exploitation as soon as possible after the Commission's February 2015 meeting. The outcome of the LTC's deliberations on this matter have been duly submitted and will be debated by Council under agenda item 13.

To allow sufficient time and thought for these two priority agenda items, Council will consider item 12 tomorrow afternoon, on Wednesday 15 July, and on Thursday morning 16 July. We are going to consider agenda item

13, on the draft exploitation regulations, next Monday afternoon 20 July, next Wednesday 22 July, and next Thursday morning 23 July.

Based on the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, under agenda item 11 on the morning of Monday 20 July, Council will consider an application for the plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area, submitted by China MinMetals Corporation, sponsored by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

On Thursday morning 9 July, Council will consider the report and recommendations of the Finance Committee. Under agenda item 10, on Thursday afternoon 16 July and Friday 17 July, Council will consider the report of the Legal and Technical Commission.

The Council will also consider the report on the status of the contracts for exploration and related matters, as well as the status of national legislations relating to deep seabed mining. Under agenda items 7 and 8 these two matters will be considered on the morning of Wednesday 15 July.

Under agenda item 14, Council will deliberate on procedures for the election in 2016 of the members of the Legal and Technical Commission; and under agenda 15, matters relating to the Authority's cooperation with other relevant international organizations.

In conclusion, during this session, Council is expected to make decisions on the following matters:

1. Decision on the application for plan of work submitted by China MinMetals Corporation;
2. Decision on the proposed procedures and criteria for the extension of an approval of plan of work for exploration;
3. Decision on the report and recommendations of the Finance Committee, if any;
4. Decision on the report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission during this session, if any;
5. Decision on the draft regulations for exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, if any;

6. Decision on the draft agreement of cooperation between IMO and ISA; and
7. Decision on the draft MOU between ISA and the Pacific Community.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I thank you for your kind attention, and look forward to the debate ahead.

(ENDS)