



**Twelfth Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on the Follow-up and Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs**

*Agenda item: Opening session*

Virtual Event

**15 July 2021**

INTERVENTION

By H.E. Michael W. Lodge,  
Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Thank you for this opportunity to intervene on behalf of the International Seabed Authority.

This time last year, ISA was pleased to participate in the tenth inter-agency meeting to review the draft road map for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. We were pleased then to offer ISA's support to landlocked developing States in terms of capacity development in marine science, especially for women, access to marine scientific research and ensuring full participation in deep sea exploration. All of these have the potential to provide new opportunities for economic development and we must ensure that these opportunities are also available to landlocked developing countries.

Since then, I have continued to take an active interest in the work of UN-OHRLLS in this respect and I was pleased to see ISA's commitments fully reflected in the road map.

We have also started to work in earnest to turn our commitments into action.

Following the adoption by the ISA Assembly of its decision ISBA/26/A/18 in December 2020, we are now developing a dedicated capacity development strategy which will address the needs identified by LLDCs. In line with the same decision, the ISA Secretariat has issued a call for Members to nominate National Focal Points for capacity development (NAFOP). As of today, 39 nominations have been received including from 3 LLDCS (Eswatini, Lao, Nepal). I encourage others to follow.

With a view to raising awareness of potential benefits to LLDCs of ratification United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and participate in activities in the international seabed area (deep sea exploration, exploitation, marine scientific research), we have developed a dedicated publication aimed at informing LLDCS of the potential benefits offered to them by UNCLOS. This publication, entitled "Landlocked developing countries and the law of the sea: an ocean of opportunity", along with sister publications aimed at LDCs and SIDS, will be launched in September 2021.

On 8 March 2021, ISA together with UN-OHRLLS joined hands to advance empowerment and leadership of women in marine scientific research through the joint implementation of the “Women in Deep-Sea Research” project which will focus on women scientists from developing States and in particular those from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. In that occasion, ISA and UN-OHRLLS organized a high-level webinar to identify the specific challenges and opportunities faced by women scientists from LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS in engaging in deep-sea research disciplines and leadership positions. The Chair of the Groups of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to the UN participated and shared insightful perspectives on what could be done to improve the situation. As a first major deliverable under this project, a gender mapping and analysis of barriers identified will be conducted between July and October 2021 for selected countries in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Several countries have been contacted to identify a focal point to enable data collection.

Both ISA, and me personally, remain fully committed to support the aspirations of LLDCs as expressed in the road map. UNCLOS recognizes and places special emphasis on the needs of developing landlocked States, including the right to participate in exploitation of living resources in the EEZ, to flag vessels and conduct innocent passage, and the right of access to and from the sea and freedom of transit. These rights are fundamental to achieving the outcomes of the Vienna Programme of Action.

As far as the ISA and the deep sea is concerned, the rights of developing landlocked States are even more explicit. They have the right to participate in deep sea mineral exploration and marine scientific research as well as to share in the financial and economic benefits from deep sea minerals.

I continue to urge the landlocked developing States, who make up 10% of the membership of ISA, to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them under UNCLOS. I also urge the remaining 12 landlocked developing States who are not yet party to UNCLOS to become parties as soon as possible.

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