



**Workshop for the promotion of the sustainable development of Africa's deep-seabed resources in support of Africa's blue economy strategy**

Virtual Workshop

**1 June 2021**

Opening Remarks

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

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Your Excellency, Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations,

Your Excellency, Mr. Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining of the African Union Commission,

Mr. Jens Frolich Holte, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway,

Colleagues and friends of the Authority,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Greetings from Kingston, Jamaica.

Welcome to the third workshop organized under the ADSR project to promote international and regional cooperation for the sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources in support of Africa's Blue Economy.

First and foremost, I wish to thank the Government of Mauritius for hosting this event today. I am sure I speak for everyone if I say that we would have loved to have been able to be in Mauritius today.

Nevertheless, it is a great pleasure to be able to organize this workshop in partnership with Mauritius and I trust that we will find another opportunity to cross the oceans and meet again soon.

Ladies and gentlemen,

African States make up 47 of the 168 Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This includes 38 coastal States whose maritime areas cover approximately 13 million square kilometres.

There has always been a close relationship between the International Seabed Authority and Africa. The Chair of the First Committee of UNCLOS III, which was responsible for Part XI of the Convention, was Paul Bamela Engo of Cameroon. Both the Presidents of the Preparatory Commission – Joseph Warioba of Tanzania and Jose Luis Jesus of Sao Tome and Principe – came from Africa.

My immediate predecessor as Secretary-General, Nii Allotey Odunton, came from Ghana. As of today, nine African States sit on the Council of the Authority, including for the first time in 2021, Mauritius. Moreover, six African experts are members of the Finance Committee or the Legal and Technical Commission.

Nevertheless, despite this long-standing commitment of Africa to the work of the Authority, Africa remains the only regional group that has not yet taken full advantage of the provisions of the Convention to take part in deep sea mineral exploration.

This is one reason why, since taking office in 2017, I have made it a priority for the Authority to seek to establish strategic partnerships with relevant international and regional organizations, such as the African Union, UNECA, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the African Development Bank and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie in order to better identify and respond to the specific needs of African States.

That is also why, in 2017, at the United Nations' Ocean Conference, the Authority in partnership with the African Minerals Development Centre of the African Union, registered a Voluntary Commitment (#OceanAction16374) aimed at supporting the sustainable development of Africa's Blue Economy. The concept for this Voluntary Commitment emerged from a workshop held in early 2017 in Kampala, Uganda – the first workshop ever convened by the Authority in a landlocked developing country.

Since then, our Voluntary Commitment has been translated into a project, known as the Africa Deep Seabed Resources Project (or ADSR project). The project is led by the Authority and implemented in partnership with the African Union and the Government of Norway, through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Norway for its strong support for this initiative and to recognize State Secretary Holte, who will speak later this morning.

The ADSR project envisages five subregional workshops across the African continent. The first such workshop took place in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, in October 2018. Not only was this a great success, but also it was another first – the first time the Authority held an activity in a Francophone country.

The second workshop, aimed at southern African States, was organized in Pretoria, South Africa in May 2019.

This third workshop was initially scheduled to take place in April 2020 but had to be postponed for obvious reasons. Although we had hoped we would be able to resume travel by now, we decided, in conjunction with the host government, that we should not delay any further.

I attach particular importance to this workshop as it has been designed to respond to the challenges faced by very different and diverse countries. Three of the participating countries to this workshop are least developed countries, and two are also small island developing States. One is landlocked and one is not yet a member of the Authority.

Against this background, the main objectives of the ADSR Project are threefold:

First, to better inform the decision-making processes of African States in relation to deep sea exploration, deep sea mineral resources and future mining.

Second, to strengthen the technical capacity of national experts, including women.

Third, to stimulate reflection and discussion that could result in recommendations to increase and improve the capacity of African nationals in deep sea exploration, marine scientific research and marine technology.

At the core of the Authority's mandate is the dual responsibility to allow the sustainable development of the mineral resources of the deep seabed for the benefit of all humanity while at the same time ensuring protection and preservation of the marine environment.

In recent years, the wealth of natural resources, including living and non-living marine resources, that are to be found in the oceans and seas surrounding the African Continent has generated growing interest.

The potential benefits that could be derived from sustainable development of deep seabed resources located on the continental shelves of African States and in the international seabed Area could be a key driver for the development of Africa's Blue Economy. This strategic linkage is clearly established by the African Union in its 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy and Agenda 2063, and in the Africa Blue Economy Strategy.

What is clear is that the benefits for African countries of strengthening their engagement in the activities undertaken in the international seabed Area cannot be disputed. Scientific knowledge, of resources and environmental conditions, is fundamental to better management. It is only on the basis of such knowledge that clear-sighted decisions can be made.

For this reason, I expect that the implementation of our the ADSR project will contribute significantly to the regional and national development objectives set out by our Member States, especially in the context of the African Decade of Seas and Oceans.

I hope that the discussions over the next few days will lay the foundations of a strategy for African States, and in particular the landlocked and least developed countries, to make the best possible use of the opportunities available to them, and that were designed for their benefit, through the Part XI regime.

Before I conclude I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the memory of two friends of the Authority and two important figures in the implementation of the ADSR project who have sadly passed away recently.

First, Mr. Paul Msoma, from the African Minerals Development Centre, who came to Kingston in February 2020, and second, very recently, Colonel-major Tano, former director-general of the maritime administration of Cote d'Ivoire, who was a long-serving representative to the Authority and had been instrumental in organizing the Abidjan workshop in 2018.

Both were extremely seasoned and experienced professionals, and the news of their deaths came as a shock for me and all my colleagues in the Authority and beyond. Their significant

contribution to the advancement of the interests of the African Continent and their commitment to this project in particular will not be forgotten.

I wish you a successful and productive workshop and I very much look forward to the outcomes of your discussions.

Thank you.

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