



High-level webinar organized by the International Seabed Authority and the Office of the High Representative of Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the United Nations

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OPENING REMARKS

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

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Wherever you are, welcome to this webinar and let me wish you a great International Women's Day.

The idea for today's initiative goes back to the UN Ocean Conference of 2017. At that time, ISA was the only organization to register a voluntary commitment, out of 1,500 voluntary commitments, aimed specifically at improving women's empowerment and leadership in ocean science.

Indeed, we were the first to recognize that, despite numerous initiatives being adopted and implemented at global, regional and national levels to create new opportunities for women in non-traditional as well as emerging sectors, the participation of women scientists from developing countries in ocean science and deep-sea research was very low.

For example, ocean observation and ocean technology areas are very much dominated by men, who make up 75% of the researchers. Participation of women in ocean science also varies widely among nations, ranging from 7% in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to 72% in Ireland. The global average stands at 37%.

In addition to the general lower representation, another critical challenge is the significant lack of parity in female representation in leadership positions in science. The so-called leaky pipeline of continuous drop-out of women at consecutive career stages, eventually leads to a visibly disproportionate representation of women at leadership and decision-making levels.

This is particularly true for women scientists from developing States, specifically from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, who also face their own unique challenges. That is why we have decided to join hands with the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries,

Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to take this initiative to the next level.

Since 2017, we have taken several measures to advance our commitment.

As an International Gender Champion, we have made a public commitment to adapt our capacity building initiatives to enhance the role of women scientists.

As a result, and through enhanced collaboration with our 31 exploration contractors and the Legal and Technical Commission, we have progressively increased the number of qualified women selected for training programmes. In 2014, 25% of trainees were women. This was increased to 42% by 2017 and 50% in 2019.

Our success in achieving this milestone was partly the result of a comprehensive review of all capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by ISA since 1994. Whilst this identified some of the impediments to progress, it also revealed that much more needs to be done.

For example, the result of a consultation with ISA member States – and we are the only organization to have carried out such a consultation on this topic – revealed that 51% of respondents indicated that their countries lacked any commitment to enhancing the role of women in science. At the same time, 47% of respondents agreed that such a commitment was badly needed, along with the necessary support to make it happen.

Nowhere is this need greater than in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Since December 2020, our commitment is even more strongly recognized in the context of the ISA Action Plan in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science, adopted by all 168 Members of ISA in December 2020. I am delighted to be joined today by His Excellency Luis del Solar, Permanent Representative of Argentina to ISA. We will hear from him later and he will tell us why Argentina has decided to step forward as the champion of our Action Plan.

I also want to thank all the panelists who will be with us today for the support expressed to ISA in taking this initiative a step forward.

Our commitment now is to design and deliver a series of innovative and ground-breaking activities with all our partners to ensure that we can effectively deliver transformative actions.

I invite all of you to join us.
