



**76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Agenda Item 79 (a) Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

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STATEMENT

by

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

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It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Michael W. Lodge, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority. Regrettably, the Secretary-General cannot be here today in person because the Council of the Authority is meeting in person in Kingston this week.

Today the General Assembly will reaffirm once again that the Convention and its two implementation agreements set out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

The International Seabed Authority plays a crucial role within that framework. As the international organization tasked with organizing and controlling activities in the Area, protecting the marine environment and promoting and encouraging marine scientific research for the benefit of all, the Authority is a critical part of the governance architecture for the global ocean.

I wish to thank the General Assembly for the many positive references to the work of the Authority contained in the draft resolution before the Assembly. In these difficult times, the ongoing support of member States for the work of the Authority is very much appreciated.

As always, I also wish to acknowledge the extraordinary support and cooperation we have received from the Office of the Legal Counsel and the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. We continue to work closely together in a spirit of cooperation to respond to and support the needs of member States, including in the context of UN Oceans.

I am particularly encouraged by the overwhelming support of member States for the swift resumption of in-person meetings of the Authority after almost two years. Whilst all the organs of the Authority worked creatively and relentlessly throughout that period, the resumption of in-person meetings will allow us to conclude the business of the twenty-sixth session, which began in 2020, and lay the groundwork for the twenty-seventh session.

Mr. President,

The regime for the deep seabed under the Convention is one of the few international governance regimes that has been designed in such a way that the interests and needs of developing States are fully integrated into the regime.

I wish to take this opportunity to highlight three ways in which the Authority has responded to this mandate over the past year.

First, the secretariat recently issued a series of three publications on the relevance of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We were pleased to launch these reports with the support of the UN-OHRLLS. The objective is to assist these groups of States to ensure ownership through informed decision-making processes that can support the development of new opportunities for socio-economic development. In this spirit, I would take this opportunity to reiterate the importance for these States, and particularly the Land-Locked Developing States, to join the Convention and take full advantage of the legal regime for the oceans.

Secondly, we have focused on revitalizing capacity development programmes and initiatives to address the needs that were identified by developing States themselves through the survey circulated by the secretariat in 2020. We are proud to say that in one year only and despite significant challenges due to travel restrictions more than 600 individuals from developing States have benefitted from at least one of the capacity-building initiatives implemented by the Authority including through workshops. An increasing number of these individuals are women.

Third, the efforts of the Authority have also been directed to expand tangible and meaningful capacity building and capacity development opportunities for nationals of developing States in marine scientific research. We are particularly proud of our collective action towards the empowerment and leadership of women scientists from Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The overwhelming support received from members, partners organizations, contractors, research institutions, as well as international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of our “Women in Deep-Sea Research” project has been and still is decisive in this regard.

Mr. President,

Another key priority for the Authority has been to implement the Action Plan in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development that was unanimously adopted by the Assembly of the Authority in December 2020. Significant progress has been made this year and a report detailing the progress made will be discussed by the Assembly next week in Jamaica.

It is my hope that through this Action Plan the international momentum towards advancing scientific knowledge and understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, including biodiversity and ecosystems of the Area, will be further reinforced. The Plan also emphasizes the need to promote the dissemination and sharing of scientific data and the outputs of research with a view to better inform decision-making processes and increase deep-sea literacy to support inclusive participation.

The full implementation of the Action Plan is essential to the effective application of the precautionary approach, which already governs all aspects of the work of the Authority, as it serves to advance the scientific basis for continuous improved assessment of the impacts and risks related to deep-seabed exploration and future exploitation activities.

Mr. President,

In 2022 we will mark the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. This will be an occasion for celebration, but also an opportunity to renew our collective commitment to the Convention as an instrument for peace, security and equity.

I am pleased to announce that, in 2022, as part of the global celebration of the Convention, the secretariat of the Authority will organize the first ever *Women in the Law of the Sea Conference*. This conference is intended to celebrate the contribution of women to the development of the law of the sea, their participation in the institutions created by the Convention and related regional and sub-regional organizations and the pathways to enhancing the potential for women to contribute to the law of the sea in the future. We have recently issued a call for expressions of interest from potential speakers. Responses from women from developing States and in particular from Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States are particularly encouraged.¹

Mr. President,

The legal regime for the Area reflects a vision of a more fair and equal society. The unique mandate assigned to the Authority is to give life to this ideal of equity and economic and social solidarity in access to and sustainable management of the mineral wealth of the deep seabed for the benefit of all humanity.

¹ <https://www.isa.org.jm/conference-women-law-sea-2022>

Through the Authority, access to these resources is assured to both developed and developing States, rich and poor, large and small. At the same time, strict regulation ensures that we use these resources sustainably and in a way that provides long-term benefits for all.

However, to achieve this vision requires international cooperation as well as the commitment of all States. The urgent need for this level of cooperation and commitment has recently been highlighted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report 'Our Common Agenda'. In that report, the Secretary-General emphasized the need to strengthen and accelerate multilateral cooperation to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and make a tangible difference in people's lives.

That is why it is encouraging that an independent report on the *Contribution of the Authority to the 2030 Agenda*² commissioned by the secretariat of the Authority and released last week concluded that the work of the Authority already contributes to 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. I wish to take this opportunity to commend the recommendations of the report to the General Assembly and encourage all member States, within the framework of the Convention, to continue to work collaboratively to achieve our common objective to strengthen global governance for the sake of present and future generations.³

² https://isa.org.jm/files/files/documents/ISA_Contribution_to_the_SDGs_2021.pdf

³ UNGA, A/RES/76/6.