



The United Nations at 75

JAMAICA, Kingston
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STATEMENT

by

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Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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In his address to the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2020, the UN Secretary-General called for a strengthened and renewed multilateralism, geared towards the overarching goals of peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.

As we celebrate today the achievements of the UN, we should recall that one of its greatest and most enduring successes designed to benefit humankind is certainly to be found in the development of a global legal regime for the ocean through the adoption in 1982 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Described as the “constitution for the oceans”, this fundamental treaty is indeed a striking illustration of the collective contribution of the international community to this vision of a more fair and equal society.

The 1982 Convention established certainty in the law of the sea and brought peace and order to the oceans. It provided for an equitable relationship among States in their use of the ocean and has been a major contribution to international peace and security.

Although the Convention is multi-faceted, covering every aspect of humanity’s use of the oceans, four key elements stand out: rights of access to the sea and its resources, protection of the marine environment, maritime dispute settlement, and lastly, and obviously most dear to my heart, the Convention established an entirely novel legal regime for the largest untapped mineral resources on the planet, designating these resources as the ‘common heritage of mankind.’

These resources are managed by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) which today comprises 167 members and the European Union. Its unique mandate is to give life to the ideal of equity and economic and social solidarity in the access to and sustainable management of deep seabed minerals for the benefit of all humanity. Through ISA, access to these resources is assured to both developed and developing States, rich and poor, large, and small. The data collected through exploration and marine scientific research

expeditions is compiled with the aim of being shared broadly with all. No other resource on the planet is managed in this way and we have struggled so far to apply similar ideals to extra-terrestrial resources.

At a time when the international community reflects on how to strengthen multilateralism and cooperation, the 75th anniversary of the UN presents an inspirational moment to reaffirm our commitment to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and ensure that its provisions are implemented on the basis of equity and for the benefit of all humanity.
