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Advancing women empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research to support inclusive sustainable ocean governance

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STATEMENT

by

Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Welcome to this side event, which we are proud to convene in collaboration with Antigua and Barbuda, Canada, Malta, and Tonga, as well as with colleagues from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the African Union, OECD, the Pacific Community, MABIK, IFREMER and the National Oceanographic Centre.

I am particularly pleased to acknowledge the distinguished presence today of the UN Legal Counsel, Miguel de Serpa Soares, as well as the Honourable Minister Fekita ‘Utoikamanu.

Science, technology and innovation are critical to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. Yet, the scientific and technological advances on which the Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets depend rely on the full and effective participation of women in science.

Despite numerous initiatives being adopted and implemented at global, regional and national levels, women continue to be underrepresented in ocean science. Particularly in highly technical areas and in leadership roles. This reflects a historical gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the impact of which can be seen in many ocean-based sectors where women are severely underrepresented.

Unless systematic change is introduced to reduce the gender gap, existing ocean-based sectors as well as emerging and future ocean-based sectors such as marine energy and marine minerals will continue to suffer from the same lack of gender parity.

Since 2020, the Authority together with UN-OHRLLS and more than 20 partners comprising governments, research agencies, international and regional organizations, and the private sector is implementing a dedicated initiative to advance women empowerment and leadership of women scientists from developing States particularly those from LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

This project is the concretization of previous efforts initiated at the 2017 UN Ocean conference, where ISA was at the time the only entity to register a dedicated voluntary commitment to promote women empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research.

The Women in Deep-Sea Research project has been designed to address the critical challenges faced by women scientists. In so doing, the project centres around four key areas of action - policy development, capacity development, sustainability and partnerships, and communication and outreach.

The first activity under the WIDSR project was to undertake a gender mapping of the deep-sea research field and related disciplines and activities in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS as well as an analysis of the barriers they face in accessing leadership positions.

I am pleased today to be able to share with you the key findings of this unprecedented effort. I also wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the 9 international experts who gave freely of their time and expertise to help us prepare this report.

This report focuses on improving the availability of data and information on the current status of women scientists in deep-sea research in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and identifying critical barriers and potential solutions in relation of women's participation and leadership in deep-sea research. I hope it provides timely and necessary evidence to support the urgent need to accelerate collective efforts in support of enhancing the role of women in marine scientific research.

I commend the recommendations contained in the report and invite our current and future partners to make sure that collectively, we will deliver transformative actions towards women empowerment and leadership in deep-sea research.

Earlier this month, together with the Honourable Minister 'Utoikamanu and the UN Legal Counsel Miguel de Serpa Soares as well as many other leaders in ocean affairs, such as you Ambassador Frazier, I had the pleasure to launch the International Gender Champions Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women (IGROW).

The aims of this new Impact Group, which I invite you all to join, are threefold:

- Ensuring strategic visibility of gender issues in the field of ocean affairs (advocacy and outreach)
- Promoting and facilitating targeted capacity-building initiatives and programmes to support increased women participation in ocean affairs (organizational as well as programmatic)
- Advancing women empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research and international law (including through the Women in Deep-Sea Research project)

It is my hope that creating this Impact Group, and you all joining hands with us, can catalyze efforts to change the situation.

Thank you.
