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**Empowering women: an ocean of opportunities in science, policy and blue economy**

**Lisbon, Portugal**

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STATEMENT

by

Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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To ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability of ocean-based industries, it is essential that marine scientific research and ocean governance are promoted and supported.

The rule of law is also at the core of the ability of the international community to “ensure a legal order for the seas and oceans,” which will facilitate communication and will promote the peaceful uses of the seas and oceans, the equitable and efficient utilization of their resources, the conservation of their living resources, and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Yet, in all this, women are still severely under-represented in many areas of ocean affairs, including in highly technical and emerging fields of ocean science and engineering.

This reflects a historical gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). However, unless systematic change is introduced to reduce the gender gap, traditional ocean-based sectors such as fisheries, maritime transport as well as emerging and future ocean-based sectors such as offshore renewables and marine minerals, will continue to suffer from lack of gender parity.

It is, therefore, urgent and necessary that collective efforts be engaged to ensure that women are provided with the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of ocean related issues including through increased efforts to support women empowerment and leadership in all fields of ocean governance and ocean science.

Women's empowerment and leadership is defined as a priority of ISA's programmatic mandate, as reflected in the significant efforts made towards enhancing the role and participation of women from developing States in deep-sea research, including through tailored capacity-building and capacity development activities.

Later this week, under our Women in Deep-Sea Research project, implemented jointly by ISA and the UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, we will release a major report on "Empowering Women from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in Deep-Sea Research".

The report provides a detailed gender mapping of deep-sea research and related disciplines, including careers in different sectors, and identifies the critical barriers faced by women from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in participating and accessing leadership roles in fields relating to marine scientific research.

At the organizational level, thanks to the emphasis placed on reaching gender parity among ISA staff, 60 per cent of Secretariat staff are women as of June 2022.

Also, two weeks ago, in my capacity as International Gender Champion, and together with the Honourable Minister 'Utoikamanu and the UN Legal Counsel Miguel de Serpa Soares as well as many other leaders in ocean affairs, 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)

In September this year, together with UN-OLA, we will hold the first ever Women in the Law of the Sea Conference where women experts from all over the world, including developing States and particularly from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, will gather to discuss current and emerging issues in the law of the sea.

I invite all of you to join us in these different initiatives and, together, to strengthen our efforts to ensure that the role and participation of women in marine science as well as in ocean affairs in general truly reflect their contribution in society.

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