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**Ensuring the stewardship of seabed mineral resources and the protection of the marine environment of the Area for the benefit of humankind**

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**Lisbon, Portugal**

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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 Canada, Cook Islands, France, India, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore and Tonga, as well as with colleagues from the UN Office of Legal Affairs, OECD and the UN Global Compact. I am particularly pleased to acknowledge the distinguished presence today of the UN Legal Counsel, Miguel de Serpa Soares.

Today's event provides us with an opportunity to highlight some of the work being done by the international community to establish strong partnerships to support the sustainable management of the deep seabed and its resources and how these can contribute to achieving the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

The context for this event is a report that I had commissioned in 2021 on the contribution of ISA to the Sustainable Development Goals. This independent report found that, through implementing its mandate under UNCLOS, and progressing the voluntary commitments registered at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, ISA contributes in a meaningful way to 12 of the 17 SDGs, including, of course, SDG 14.

The discussion today will unpack these findings as well as touch on some of the issues to be discussed in interactive dialogues 6, 7 and 8.

The deep seabed and its abundant mineral resources have a unique status in international law. Designated by UNCLOS – the constitution for the ocean – as the common heritage of humankind, it is the only example

that we have of a global commons that has been set aside to be managed internationally for the common good.

The scientific research being undertaken will enable us to better understand our planet and further make a sustainable future. The rich mineral deposits found on the seafloor and the biodiversity associated with them also create exciting opportunities for sustainable development.

It is no exaggeration to say that how well we – collectively – manage this space and its resources is one of the greatest tests for multilateralism we will face in the coming years.

Fortunately, we have a platform for doing so. That platform is the International Seabed Authority, which was created with the mandate to provide a neutral space for collective deliberation and related trade-offs over the common heritage leading to joint decision-making based on consensus building.

It is easy to forget the context within which the Authority was established. At the time UNCLOS was being negotiated, there was a real threat of unilateral claims being made to deep seabed resources, which could easily have led to unrestrained exploitation of the deep seabed and appropriation of its resources for the benefit of only a few. There would be no benefit to developing countries, in terms of access to resources, scientific knowledge and technology, and no common environmental standards.

These were the factors that led visionaries like Arvid Pardo and others to call on the United Nations to set the deep seabed aside as a space to be shared between all nations and to establish an international machinery to manage that space before any activity could take place.

This grand project for humanity could easily have failed. Instead, the regime has succeeded beyond all expectations in its primary objectives of preventing unilateral claims to deep seabed resources and prescribing comprehensive and uniform global environmental standards for any activity. It offers a concrete example of how the international community can come together to ensure sound and careful management of global public goods for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

The mandates of the Authority are clear.

- The Authority must strictly regulate all mineral related activities and in doing so apply the highest possible environmental standards, using the best scientific evidence. These global standards will form a benchmark for the rest of the world.
- The Authority must promote and encourage marine scientific research in the deep seabed and make sure that the results of this research are made available to everyone.

- The Authority must ensure full and effective participation by developing States in the activities carried out in the deep seabed.
- The Authority must ensure that activities in the deep seabed are carried out for the benefit of humanity and shared equitably.

How well the Authority is delivering on these mandates is apparent from the report.

The standards applied to deep sea mineral exploration are the most rigorous for any activity being carried out in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are already well on the way to comprehensive regulation of mineral extraction before any activity has started, which is an unprecedented achievement for any regulatory sector.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the group of 10 internationally renowned experts who gave freely of their time and expertise to help us prepare this report. It was a great pleasure working with such a distinguished group and I thank each and every one of them for their contribution.

The report, which I stress was prepared completely independently of the secretariat, was the product of very wide stakeholder consultation. I wish to thank all those who accepted to be interviewed for the report. We deliberately made sure that the interviewees would reflect as many perspectives as possible and that their views would be taken into account. I was impressed by the fact that although they had different views on many issues, all interviewees shared a strong sense of commitment to the underlying mission of the Authority.

Of course, a lot of work remains ahead of us.

UNCLOS, and the institutions established by it, face significant challenges. They need the continued support and commitment of member States as they implement the mandates that have been conferred on them. I hope today's event will demonstrate how that sense of commitment is being manifested in relation to the work of the Authority.

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