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## **High-Level Ocean Decade Alliance Meeting**

**Lisbon, Portugal**

**27 June 2022**

STATEMENT

by

Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is very pleased to be a part of the Ocean Decade Alliance and to join in today's Call for Action. We fully endorse the need to increase investment in ocean science.

In fact, constant improvement in the state of scientific knowledge is critical to effective management of the ocean and its resources.

Here, there is good news and bad news. The good news is that the technology and the know-how used for marine scientific research is developing rapidly, especially in relation to the deep sea, where knowledge is also growing rapidly.

The less good news is that when we look at the capacity to carry out this research today – for example, if we look at the ocean-going research fleet around the world – we can also see that very little of that capacity is in the hands of developing countries.

The same goes for AUV and ROV technology, which offers tremendous capabilities, but remains costly and out of reach for most developing countries. We also know for certain that the deep-sea exploration techniques we use today will not be the same in 10 or 20 years.

So, if it is hard for developing countries to take part in marine scientific research in the deep sea now, we can only assume that it will be even more difficult in the future.

That is one reason why ISA has been given a unique responsibility for marine scientific research in the seabed beyond national jurisdiction. It forms a core part of our mandate, given to us by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and part of it is to build the capacities of developing States and technologically less advanced States in scientific research and facilitate the transfer of technology.

It is a sign of the strong commitment of ISA and its 168 Members to the objectives of the Decade, in line with our mandate, that the ISA Assembly adopted a multi-year action plan in support of the Decade in December 2020.

The plan contains six strategic research priorities, selected because they are fundamental to achieving our end goal of sustainable management of the global commons for the benefit all humanity based on best available science and a precautionary approach.

We have made significant progress so far and I believe that more is to come and I will just mention three short examples.

On World Oceans Day, on 8 June – in collaboration with our partners at the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) in Monaco - we launched the AREA2030 initiative. The aim of this initiative is to encourage exploration contractors to voluntarily provide high resolution bathymetric data from exploration so that it can be made widely available to all. These are the best, and in many cases, the only data available on remote areas of the seabed and will make a very important contribution to the goal of mapping the seafloor by 2030.

This week, on 29 June, we will launch the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative – SSKI – which aims to develop scientifically robust methodologies to understand the environmental effects of activities in the Area. I am delighted that this initiative, which will make a major global contribution to deep sea science, has already received a significant level of funding from the European Commission.

Also this week, to pick up on the comments made by the Honorable Minister from Canada, we will launch an important report outlining the key findings of a gender-mapping analysis and identification of the critical barriers faced by women scientists from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in deep-sea related research disciplines. This is one of the first outputs of our flagship Women in Deep Sea Research (WIDSR) project, in

partnership with UN-OHRLLS and more than 20 partners including national governments, research institutions, international and regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

I very much hope that you will come to those side events this week but even more than that, I hope that you and others, from all sectors, will join these and other initiatives under the ISA Action Plan, to focus investments in deep-sea science and research in these priority areas, and help us create tangible outcomes for sustainable development.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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