



**Global launch of the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative:
Advancing scientific understanding of deep-sea ecosystems in the international seabed area for the
benefit of all humanity**

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STATEMENT

by

Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this event for the launch of our latest flagship initiative - the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative or SSKI.

At the outset, let me express my sincere appreciation to the Governments of Argentina, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Commission for sponsoring today's event.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to all our partner organizations and institutions that have supported the organization of this event and made it possible. A special recognition goes to Mr. Thembile Joyini, vice-chair of the ISA Legal and Technical Commission, who accepted to co-chair this event with me today.

When it comes to marine scientific research, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea assigns a comprehensive set of responsibilities to ISA. For instance, ISA has the duty to promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area. But the Convention also tasks ISA with the responsibility to coordinate and disseminate the results of such research and analysis when available. In addition, the Convention requires ISA to ensure that programmes are developed to strengthen the research capabilities of developing States and technologically-less-advanced States, as well as to ensure their effective participation in deep-sea exploration and research programmes.

This mandate is central to the work of the organization. So much so that in 2020, all 168 members of ISA unanimously endorsed the adoption of a dedicated Action Plan to formalize the contribution of ISA to the objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. This Action Plan identifies six strategic research priorities, in line with ISA's Strategic Plan and High-level Action Plan for the period 2019-2023.

The first of these strategic research priorities is to advance scientific knowledge and understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions, in the Area.

To achieve this, it is necessary to start with a strong and inclusive network of scientists who can collaborate through a global knowledge-sharing platform. This is the purpose of SSKI: to create an interdisciplinary nexus between governments, scientific communities, international organizations, and relevant industries to generate data and information on deep-sea biodiversity, facilitate access to these data and make use of them.

The growing interest in marine mineral resources is a response to a societal need. It is our collective responsibility to support innovative and transformative solutions to sustainable ocean development for the benefit of all humanity. By connecting science and industry, SSKI will promote the development of tools and skills that will increase the uptake of science into policy and management decisions. One of the key missions of SSKI is to create data flow pipelines that can enable best practices to be developed for marine environmental impact and risk assessment, long-term ocean observing and monitoring systems and area-based management.

This in turn will make an important contribution to improving the integrated management of deep-sea resources and ensuring the protection of the marine environment in the Area.

I am confident that with your support, SSKI will significantly contribute to advancing our global understanding of deep-sea biodiversity and ecosystems. It will also create opportunities to foster international cooperation and scale-up ocean action based on science and innovation for achieving the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and in particularly SDG 14.

Thank you.
