



Fostering international and regional cooperation in support of the sustainable development of the blue economy in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS

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STATEMENT

by

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I am very pleased to welcome all participants to this side event on fostering international and regional cooperation in support of the sustainable development of the blue economy in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Let me extend a special welcome to our distinguished partners this morning:

- Liu Zhenmin, USG UN DESA
- Tanzania
- Tonga
- Norway
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bangladesh
- Botswana
- Cook Islands
- Malta
- UN-OHRLLS
- African Union

We are honoured that you could join us today.

The deep sea may seem quite remote from the immediate and urgent challenges of today. LDCs and LLDCs have many other real and pressing needs. SIDS may have a closer relationship with the ocean, but equally face specific challenges to benefit fully from the possibilities of the blue economy, especially in terms of capacity.

Nevertheless, the interests of all humanity in the ocean and the conservation and sustainable use of its resources make it imperative that the global governance regime reflects the maritime interests of all States, whether coastal or landlocked, and with due consideration for the specific needs of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

The regime for the deep seabed under UNCLOS is one of the few international governance regimes that has been designed in such a way that the interests and needs of developing States are fully integrated into the regime.

Fundamentally, the mission of the International Seabed Authority is to strengthen capacity in order to promote the effective participation of all developing States in deep sea exploration and to ensure that the benefits of marine science and technology are distributed equitably.

In this sense, the Authority serves as a platform for international cooperation in which the specific interests and needs of developing States, including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, are explicitly recognized in the governance structure.

That is why, since taking office in 2017, I have attached the utmost importance to empowering LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS to take advantage of the opportunities open to them under UNCLOS.

The Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan of the Authority for 2019-2023 provide for specific actions to improve the participation of developing States in the implementation of the regime of the Area. This means identifying the needs of those States in the implementation of the regime but also the potential barriers to their participation in activities in the Area.

The need for improved capacities and access to marine scientific research programmes in the international seabed Area has also been explicitly recognized as a priority by the members of the Authority when they adopted the Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, in December 2020 (ISBA/26/A/17)

Let me mention some of the concrete steps we have taken to support the aspirations of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

In the case of LLDCs, we have made specific commitments which are reflected in the Road map for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. These actions include:

- Assistance and support to increase awareness of potential benefits for LLDCs to ratify and implement UNCLOS and participate in activities in the Area.
- Increasing awareness of the benefits of the blue economy for LLDCs including through the establishment of a benefit-sharing mechanism for economic and non-financial benefits derived from activities in the Area.
- Identifying measures to increase the participation of LLDCs in the work of ISA and promoting capacity development in marine scientific research and technology transfer in line with Part XI of UNCLOS.

We are equally committed to support the recently adopted Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for 2021-2031, particularly in its focus area of leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation for sustainable development.

For the Pacific SIDS who are sponsoring activities in the Area, we launched the Abyssal Initiative as a voluntary commitment at the 2017 Ocean Conference and, with the support of UN-DESA and NORAD, have been able to organize a series of workshops and activities aimed at building the capacity of national administrations to manage their responsibilities under UNCLOS. We are now working with SIDS in the Caribbean like Antigua and Barbuda to leverage further the potential of the blue economy in support of their national development objectives.

For all three groups of States, we have implemented the Women in Deep Sea Research Project to promote the empowerment and leadership of women scientists of LDCs, LLDCS and SIDS in deep sea research related disciplines.

We have also launched a series of publications dedicated to outlining the benefits of UNCLOS for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in a way that is transparent and accessible.

I would like to take this opportunity today to state that I am committed to redouble the efforts of the Authority to support LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to participate effectively in all aspects of the work of the Authority and for that, to mobilize political will and resources to build and develop the capacity of the most vulnerable.

The objective is to ensure ownership through informed decision-making processes that can support the development of new opportunities for socio-economic development.

As the 'constitution for the oceans', UNCLOS is a striking illustration of the collective contribution of the international community to the vision of a more fair and equal society. It also represents a common denominator for the different maritime interests of all States. I would like to especially encourage therefore those remaining States which have not so far ratified UNCLOS, to do so as soon as possible. This list is now quite short but includes 15 LLDCs and 9 LDCs.

To all developing States I say the same: this organization is yours, as well as the opportunities it opens to all. I therefore urge all LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to continue to take full advantage of the regime and realize the benefits that are available.

I look forward to the discussions and am confident that with your continued support we will deliver innovative and ground-breaking activities that can effectively deliver transformative actions benefiting all developing States members of the Authority and in particular the most vulnerable of them.
