



Statement By

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To the Twenty-Third Meeting of the States Parties to
the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am thankful once again for this opportunity to provide the Meeting of States Parties to the 1982 Convention with information on the work of the International Seabed Authority,

Mr. President,

As States Parties are aware, the nineteenth session of the Authority will be held in Kingston next month, from 15 to 26 July. I am pleased to also brief you on some of the most significant issues on the agenda for the session.

In order to facilitate the best possible level of attendance, which has been a matter of concern for the Authority over the past, the subsidiary organs, namely the Finance Committee and the Legal and Technical Commission, will meet first, from 8 to 12 July. After the first meeting of the Assembly on 15 July, the Council will meet until completion of its work, and then the Assembly will resume its work until 26 July. Hopefully, this new pattern of meetings will facilitate attendance of the full membership of the Authority and I wish to encourage Member States to attend for the relevant parts of the session.

I take this opportunity to remind States Parties that it is the turn of the Eastern European Group to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the Assembly. It is the turn of the Western European and Other States Group to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the Council. In accordance with the usual principle, it is the turn of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Group to designate the member of the Council that will participate in the deliberations without the right to vote in 2013. I invite the regional groups concerned to consult on these appointments prior to the opening of the session.

I also wish to take this opportunity to encourage States Parties which are in arrears for a period of two years or more to pay their contributions to the budget of the Authority. As of 15 May 2013, 41 States Parties are in this position. I remind you that in accordance with article 184 of the Convention and rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, a State Party in arrears for a period of two years or more shall have no vote.

Mr. President,

Last year, the Council of the Authority approved five applications for plans of work for exploration. This means that we have now 14 approved plans of work for exploration in the Area, which represents a significant increase in the work of the Authority. So far this year, we have received six further pending applications for approval of a plan of work for exploration in the Area. These include the first three applications relating to cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts following the approval by the Assembly last year of the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for these resources.

This is the highest number of applications that has ever been placed before the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council at the same session. This is very positive for Member States who are the beneficiaries of seabed mining. It also represents a significant increase of the workload of the

Commission and presents a challenge to both the Commission and the Council in terms of managing and completing their agendas, particularly in light of the many others issues that need to be taken up during the nineteenth session.

Mr. President,

The administration and supervision of exploration contracts has a cost. Last year concerns were expressed by some Members that these costs should not be borne exclusively by States Parties from their assessed contributions to the administrative budget of the Authority. The Council agreed to take up this matter for consideration during the nineteenth session with a view to adopting a fair and equitable system for dealing with the costs associated with the ongoing administration and supervision of contracts on the basis of recommendations from the Finance Committee. Given the number of new applications, the Council will need to bear in mind that these costs will increase as the number of contracts increases and the pace of activities becomes more intense.

Mr. President,

The Authority is the unique organization which has the competence to develop an appropriate level of environmental protection for the Area. In this respect, States Parties will recall that last year the Council established for the first time an environmental management plan which gives effect to the precautionary approach and is based on an integrated and ecosystem approach and which includes the designation of a representative network of areas of particular environmental interest. This plan will be improved as more data and scientific information become available. Science has always been a key driver of the activities of the Authority as better knowledge of the deep sea environment is a prerequisite to effectively manage the common heritage of mankind. In collaboration with the contractors and the scientific community, the Authority is pursuing its efforts to standardize the taxonomy of three classes of fauna (megafauna, macrofauna and meiofauna) associated with the marine minerals for which the Authority is in the process of adopting rules, regulations and procedures for prospecting, exploration and exploitation. I am pleased to inform States Parties that this week, the first of a series of three workshops for contractor scientists and expert taxonomists to develop a standardized taxonomy for megafauna associated with polymetallic nodule deposits has been convened in Wilhelmshaven, Germany by the Authority. All exploration contractors for polymetallic nodules have been invited to the workshop. It is expected that in due course, following similar workshops for macrofauna and meiofauna associated with these deposits, the Authority and the international community will be better placed to assess the state of the marine environment prior to the mining of polymetallic nodules in the Clarion-Clipperton fracture zone (CCZ) and other polymetallic nodule-rich parts of the Area.

Mr. President,

The Authority is also responsible for developing rules, regulations and procedures for exploration for and exploitation of polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts deposits. In this respect, the Authority has completed the part of the mining code for each of the three minerals that deal with prospecting and exploration. The current challenge for the Authority is to

develop exploitation regulations. In this regard, polymetallic nodules which have been the subject of discussion since the third Conference and for which several contractors are in the final five-year period of their fifteen year exploration contracts is a good starting point.

To meet this objective, the Council and the Assembly agreed last year on a work plan to prepare by 2016 a first set of Regulations on exploitation of nodules in the Area. The challenge is to develop an exploitation regime, including a fiscal framework, that fosters commercially viable exploitation and at the same time benefits mankind as a whole. A preliminary study of the issues involved with the development of an exploitation code is entitled *Towards the Development of a Regulatory Framework for Polymetallic Nodules Exploitation in the Area* and has been released as ISA Technical Study 11. One of the main recommendations of this study is to develop a staged licensing system for polymetallic nodules exploitation. An exploration contractor interested in proceeding to exploitation would be required to first apply for a provisional mining license based upon preparation and submission of a prefeasibility study and workplans to conduct a detailed bankable feasibility study. The Legal and Technical Commission will consider this study at its next meeting.

Mr. President,

One matter I would like to highlight to States Parties is that as a result of recently concluded contracts, there are currently available eight short-term training opportunities for personnel from developing Member States. A number of other opportunities are also available through the ISA Endowment Fund. Information about these opportunities are available in the room this week and also on the website. I wish to encourage State Parties to circulate information about these opportunities and to nominate candidates.

Finally Mr. President,

I would like to remind all of you that there will be a side event on Wednesday 12 June at 1:15 pm where we will provide a further briefing on the work of the Authority during the coming session.

I thank you for this opportunity to deliver this statement.

10 June 2013