



Inception workshop of the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative

29 November – 01 December 2022

Seocheon, Republic of Korea

Background

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the International Seabed Authority (ISA) is mandated to regulate and control activities in the “Area” (international seabed area) for the benefit of humankind as a whole. At the core of its mandate is to take the measures necessary to ensure effective protection of the marine environment from potential harmful effects that may arise from seabed activities. In addition, ISA is mandated to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area, and coordinate and disseminate the results of such research and analysis when available. The importance of this obligation is highlighted by the Strategic Plan of ISA for the period 2019-2023 ([ISBA/24/A/10](#)), particularly strategic direction 4 (“Promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area”), which is being implemented through the High-level Action Plan for 2019-2023 ([ISBA/25/A/15](#)). To support the fulfilment of these mandates and the UN Decade of Ocean Science, the ISA Assembly in 2020 adopted the Action plan of the International Seabed Authority in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development ([ISBA/26/A/17](#)).

In line with this strategic framework, the ISA secretariat, in collaboration with various scientific organizations, developed the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SSKI) as a flagship initiative to advance the implementation of the Action Plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Science. Launched at the second UN Ocean Conference in June 2022, SSKI aims to strengthen cooperation among various stakeholders to generate, assess, and disseminate deep-sea biodiversity data and information in the Area. SSKI will also implement activities at both regional and global levels to build scientific capacity of experts and scientific institutions, especially in developing States, on biodiversity assessment and ecosystem monitoring in the Area. Furthermore, the Initiative aims to enhance uptake of deep-sea science in global ocean policy by facilitating integration of robust scientific data and information into decision-making processes, in collaboration with relevant international organizations. For more information on SSKI, please visit the website at: <https://isa.org.jm/sski>.

In this context, the ISA secretariat, in collaboration with the National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea (MABIK) and with financial support from the European Commission, is convening an inception workshop from 29 November to 01 December 2022 at MABIK in Seocheon, Republic of Korea. The workshop will

be conducted in two separate sessions: 1) technical session from 29-30 November 2022; and 2) hybrid public session on 1 December 2022.

The main objective of the workshop is to develop an implementation and monitoring plan of SSKI and identify partners and opportunities for collaboration. In view of the new financial agreement between ISA and the European Commission, signed in May 2022 to support SSKI, this workshop will develop an implementation and monitoring plan with a focus on advancing deep-sea species identification and description and developing innovative tools for deep-sea biodiversity assessments in the Area.

Overall objectives of the workshop:

1. To develop a comprehensive implementation and monitoring plan for SSKI on advancing deep-sea species identification and description, as well as developing innovative tools for deep-sea biodiversity assessments in the Area;
2. To identify key partners and opportunities for further resource mobilization and collaboration; and
3. To discuss practical means and ways to enhancing the role of SSKI in strengthening scientific basis for effective ocean governance.

Part I: Technical session for invited experts and SSKI partners (29-30 November) will aim to:

- Establish practical approach to implementing SSKI activities, including modalities, timeline, and monitoring of outputs;
- Develop strategies to ensure effective stakeholder engagement and mobilize partners and resources; and
- Identify potential opportunities and partners to enhance SSKI's contribution to science-policy interface for sustainable ocean governance.

Part II: Hybrid public session for registered participants (1 December) will aim to:

- Present the results of the technical session;
- Present the advanced copy of the SSKI implementation and monitoring plan; and
- Explore potential ways and means to enhance collaboration among members and stakeholders of ISA, including the scientific community, contractors, and decision-makers, for effective implementation of SSKI.

Expected outputs:

1. Implementation plan for SSKI, including expected outputs with target timeline, success criteria, and indicators to measure progress and success.
2. Identification of key partners for implementing activities and further mobilization of resources.

Expected outcomes:

1. Successful implementation of SSKI activities ensured, promoting deep-sea research.
2. Network of relevant institutions and experts to expand research efforts on deep-sea biodiversity assessments established and actively engaged by various stakeholders.
3. Resources mobilized and opportunities created for deep-sea biodiversity research.

4. SSKI's contribution to various global agendas and strategies on marine scientific research, especially the ISA Action Plan for the UN Ocean Decade, ensured.
5. SSKI's contribution to other global processes for sustainable ocean governance ensured.

Expected participants:

1. Technical session (for invited experts and SSKI partners):
Relevant scientific institutions, ISA contractors and member States, and international organizations, particularly those that have contributed to the development of SSKI and expressed interest in supporting its implementation.
2. Hybrid public session (for registered participants):
ISA member States, contractors, and observers, international organizations, and scientific institutions, selected based on their expertise and experience in deep-sea biodiversity assessments, taxonomic services, and relevant capacity-building activities, as well as their interest and capacity in technical and financial partnerships for SSKI implementation.