



PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

Agenda Item 8: Report of the Secretary-General

Delivered by
MS. MARIA ANGELA A. PONCE
Legal Adviser and Minister
Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations
New York

24th Session of the International Seabed Authority (Assembly)
24 July 2018
Kingston, Jamaica

Thank you Mr. President.

The Philippines congratulates you and your bureau on your election. You have our full support and confidence that you will lead this Session to a successful outcome.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his high quality and comprehensive report.

The exponential progress in science and technology and the increased need for minerals has renewed interest in deep-seabed mining, as evidenced by the growing number of contracts for exploration -- which now stands at 29 – and the record participation of Member States and stakeholders at this 24th session.

In these times, we reaffirm the normative and operational importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and of the work of the International Seabed Authority. It is imperative that as we proceed with sustainable management of the Area, environmental and social impact considerations remain paramount. The needs of all stakeholders, especially of developing countries, must always be considered.

Integral to the normative authority of UNCLOS is the fulfillment of Member States' obligations. Among these is the obligation of coastal states, under Article 84, paragraph 2 of the UNCLOS, to give due publicity to charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points and in case of those indicating the outer limits of the continental shelf, to deposit a copy of such charts or lists with the Secretary General of the Authority. Noting that only eight (8) states – Australia, France (with respect to Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, New Caledonia, and the Kerguelen Islands), Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, Niue, Pakistan and my country the Philippines -- have complied with this, we call on states that have not done so to do so and we urge the Presidency and the Secretariat to make this a continuing priority.

The mandate of the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) is also critical in this aspect. We commend the Commission for their hard work, and particularly take note of their efforts on the following:

1. The continuation of the review of the draft Regulations for Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area. The adoption and publication of these regulations at the soonest possible time is crucial, especially in regard of the transition into exploitation activities by Contractors who are now carrying out their last stages of exploration. At the same time, we must ensure that all stakeholders and the needed experts are thoroughly consulted so that the Regulations adequately addresses all concerns.
2. The continuation of the review of the Recommendations for the Assessment of Environmental Impacts in the exploration areas for the guidance of contractors;
3. The expeditious but in-depth review of 27 Annual Reports from contracts of exploration in the three (3) mineral deposit categories;
4. The productive joint meeting of the Commission and the Finance Committee, which is a milestone in itself considering that it is the first time it has been held. More importantly, it is a major step towards the pursuit of establishing a financial model which is a crucial component of the exploitation regulations; and
5. The systematic evaluation and eventual selection of candidates for the Training Programs offered by the different Contractors.

We also commend the efforts of the Secretariat in pursuing the implementation of the Database Management Strategy, which has seen significant progress since the project commencement last year. As the

guardian of the Common Heritage of Mankind, it is incumbent upon the Authority to keep not only a quality-controlled, but also a secure data base of all information generated by contractors and by all other entities engaged in exploration activities in the Area.

We join others who strongly support a comprehensive environmental policy, including development of Regional Environmental Management Plans. While recognizing that there is now a preliminary strategy for this, we stress the importance of transparency in the development of these REMPs.

Transparency is also a critical obligation of contractors and must be reflected in the regulations. Sponsoring states should conduct thorough consultations especially on the environmental aspects of their activities, and coastal states should be adequately informed of the result of environmental baseline studies made and their impacts, for their acceptability. We also need a mechanism to strengthen regulatory functions especially in relation to non-compliant contractors.

On financial matters, we are pleased with the Secretary-General's update yesterday that 62% of 2018 assessed contributions have been received, but note that 50 members are still in arrears for two years or more. The fulfillment of these contributions is necessary to ensure the effective functioning of the Authority. We commend the Secretariat for its cost-saving measures outlined in the Report and look forward to further creative ways of ensuring cost-savings.

We are pleased with the recognition that the Authority does not work in a vacuum, as shown by the enhanced cooperation of the Authority with the UN and other entities. As such, we appreciate the progress in the fulfillment of the Authority's voluntary commitments at the UN Oceans Conference to support the implementation of the SDG14, particularly on improving access for women to and enhancing their role in deep-sea scientific research, including through the Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep Sea Research.

The follow-up process to the UN Oceans Conference is critical to maintaining the momentum generated by it. We recall in this regard that the Authority is a focal point for the Community of Action for supporting implementation of SDG14, on "Implementation of international law as

reflected in the UNCLOS.” We ask that the Authority’s work on this be included in the next report of the Secretary-General.

We welcome the Authority’s active participation in UN Oceans on the development of proposals for the International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and in ensuring that the mandate of the Authority on marine scientific research in the Area, the collection and dissemination of information, and the protection of the marine environment from seabed activities is integrated into the Decade.

We are also pleased that the Authority has become a sponsoring organization of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection.

As a developing state, the Philippines places high importance on capacity development and training. We therefore welcome the anticipated availability by contractors of 200 training places between 2017 and 2021. It is critical that these are targeted training programs that address the needs of developing countries, while ensuring gender parity. We also call for increased support to the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area, which is essential for the participation of scientists and personnel from developing countries in MSR programs. And we support the Pacific Island States’ call for early notification of workshops and trainings, to allow for broader dissemination and maximization of applications.

Finally, Mr. President, the Philippines extends its deep appreciation to Jamaica for its warm welcome and hospitality.

Thank you.