



4th International Conference on SIDS

Side Event on “Ocean Action to support resilient prosperity in SIDS”

St. John’s, Antigua and Barbuda

29 May 2024

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Let me express my thanks to the Legal Counsel, in his capacity of focal point for UN-Oceans, for his continuous efforts and leadership in bringing us together.

Since the last International Conference in 2014, Big Ocean States have continued to make remarkable progress in pushing forward their collective agenda in all international fora – most recently of course in the context of the COSIS Advisory Opinion delivered last week.

This vision and leadership are also reflected at the ISA, where BOS are actively contributing to the development of a rules-based order for the organization and regulation of activities in the deep seabed through strict application of the precautionary approach informed by the best available science.

As a law-making institution established by UNCLOS with an exclusive mandate to manage the Area for the benefit of all, ISA is central to the global system of ocean governance. The fact that it operates by consensus of its 169 members is testament to the universal acceptance of UNCLOS and a recognition of the important role ISA plays in reconciling different interests leading ultimately to ensuring sound, evidence-based, and sustainable management of the Area.

All our work, and all decision-making within ISA, is based on the best available scientific evidence, including more than 40 years of unique datasets from deep sea exploration work carried out under UNCLOS.

The action of our member States and partners is further guided by a dedicated Global Deep Sea Research Agenda in the form of an Action Plan for MSR in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2020 by the Assembly of ISA.

Whilst our work is unique, specific and highly focused, we welcome our productive collaborations with other UN-Oceans partners. These include:

- Expanding data sharing through DeepData and as an OBIS node, and our Area2030 collaboration with IHO to share high resolution seafloor mapping data.
- Our work with IMO, ILO and FAO on standards and regulation of activities in the Area.
- Our work with the CBD Secretariat to generate knowledge on deep sea biodiversity and to support regional environmental management planning.
- Our partnership with UN-DESA on the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth to benefit Pacific SIDS sponsoring States.
- Our ongoing partnership with UN-OHRLLS to support LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Most of these partnerships, like everything ISA does, include specific objectives designed to benefit LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Furthermore, they are designed to respond to the capacity development needs identified by developing States themselves.

I am particularly proud that all our partnerships include dedicated workstreams for women's empowerment and leadership with a specific emphasis on women scientists and practitioners from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

The most recent of our partnerships was launched a few days ago, here in Antigua.

In partnership with the University of West Indies Five Islands Campus, ISA launched a new collaboration through the Centre for Excellence in Oceanography and the Blue Economy. This will focus entirely on expanding opportunities for participation of Caribbean nationals in marine scientific research programmes.

This comes on top of the launch, earlier this year, of ISA's first Joint Training and Research Centre for Africa and the Middle East, based in Alexandria, Egypt.

At the core of ISA's mandate is a collective vision of a shared future for humankind based on the sustainable use of the ocean and its resources. This vision has informed ISA's actions over the past 30 years and will continue to do so. Our task is to achieve a balanced, inclusive, equitable and sustainable management of the global commons. To support this, we will continue to strengthen and diversify the offer of tailored capacity development opportunities to address the needs identified by BOS.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with many of you in this endeavour.
