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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND SECOND MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE DR MOHAMAD MALIKI OSMAN AT THE “LEVERAGING SIDS KNOWLEDE, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND CAPACITY TO ADVANCE THE DEEP-SEA RESEARCH FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANITY” SIDE-EVENT AT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
4PM – 5.30PM, 27 MAY 2024**

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you so much for having me this afternoon.

1 First and foremost, allow me to thank the International Seabed Authority (ISA) for having me here today to deliver this address. Singapore has been a strong proponent of the instruments and institutions that underpin the international rule of law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Implementation Agreement for Part XI of UNCLOS which established the ISA. Besides being a member of the ISA Council since 2015, we are humbled to have played leadership roles in the conclusion of UNCLOS, the constitution for the oceans, in 1982, and the recently adopted Agreement under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction or better known as BBNJ.

2 As we deepen our understanding of the oceans and build up our ocean economies, we must strike a balance between the sustainable use of our finite marine resources and their conservation for future generations. SIDS cannot achieve these goals alone. A strong multilateral and evidence-based approach to sustainable ocean development is therefore key. So allow me to make two points.

3 First, UNCLOS and the 1994 Implementation Agreement set out the legal framework and obligations for deep seabed mining and its related activities.

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This creates a stable regulatory environment which is crucial for effective governance of resource-related activities in oceans and seas. These instruments and the rules, regulations, and procedures or RRP developed by the ISA have already proven to be effective in governing resource-related activities, including exploration activities, many of which are sponsored by SIDS. The final piece of the Mining Code, which the ISA Council is now developing, will provide regulatory certainty for exploitation activities and facilitate the commercial development of the deep seabed mining industry. We will continue to work with the ISA to develop RRP that balance the need for commercial viability of mining activities with the need to monitor, to address, and to mitigate environmental impacts that are a consequence of mining activities.

4 Further, the BBNJ Agreement, which was adopted by consensus last June, was the culmination of the efforts of many parties who are committed to the protection of the biodiversity of our high seas and deep seabed. The Agreement provides for equitable sharing of the benefits arising from marine scientific research on marine genetic resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and has the capacity-building provisions to ensure that developing States can fully implement and benefit from the Agreement.

5 I am thus very pleased to note that SIDS are leading the way in driving the Agreement towards its entry into force. Of the five ratifications of the BBNJ Agreement to date, three are from SIDS – Belize, Palau, and Seychelles. Singapore signed the Agreement in September 2023 and intends to ratify it as soon as possible. We also chaired the negotiations on and tabled the recently adopted resolution to establish a preparatory commission to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and its first Conference of the Parties. We look forward to participating in the preparatory commission and the Agreement's early entry into force.

6 Second, SIDS are in a unique position to share traditional and local knowledge and practices which play important roles in ocean research, monitoring, and management. For example, Singapore's tertiary education institutes, such as the Tropical Marine Science Institute, Centre for Nature Based Climate Solutions, and The Earth Observatory Singapore have conducted important deep-sea research on marine conservation and sustainable ocean development to support multilateral and evidence-based approaches. Singapore welcomes partnerships with SIDS, such as in capacity building in marine science and technology, to cultivate deep-sea literacy for our shared benefit.

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7 Our pursuit of deep-sea research is also deeply intertwined with the work of the ISA. Last year, we signed the Global Call to Action for Accelerating Sustainable Development through Deep-Sea Research, Technology, and Innovation. Such initiatives help us make more informed decisions grounded in science on the appropriate safeguards to put in place to ensure that any exploitation activity, if and when allowed, is done with the effective protection of the marine environment. I encourage SIDS to leverage the ISA’s many initiatives to advance scientific, environmental, and technological knowledge, and also to advance research on various aspects of seabed exploration and the deep seabed environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

8 As SIDS, the oceans are our lifeblood and bind us together. It is imperative that we work together to sustainably manage this precious resource. I look forward to constructive discussions later amongst you all. Thank you very much.

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