



The 5th Symposium on Global Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance

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STATEMENT

by

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Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today at this esteemed gathering on global maritime cooperation and ocean governance.

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the importance of collaborative action in managing our oceans has never been more apparent. General faith in multilateralism is fading from all horizons. This is also the case in the law of the sea. One could note a return of unilateral actions and increased polarization leaving the legacy achieved by those before us in a very fragile state of uncertainty.

The Importance of UNCLOS and its Implementing Agreements

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stands as the cornerstone of our efforts to ensure a peaceful, equitable, and sustainable use of the oceans. This "Constitution for the Oceans" provides the legal framework within which all ocean activities must be carried out. UNCLOS also serves as the foundation for national, regional, and global cooperation on marine and ocean-related matters.

A testament to the enduring relevance of UNCLOS is the adoption of its implementing agreements. The 2023 Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, the third such agreement, represents a significant step forward in our collective responsibility to protect and manage marine biodiversity for the benefit of all humankind. This achievement, along with the 30th anniversary of UNCLOS and its first implementing agreement, underscores the remarkable progress made possible through international cooperation.

The International Seabed Authority: A Model of Effective Multilateralism

Within this framework, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) plays a crucial role. The legal regime governing the Area, the seabed and ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction, stands as a remarkable example of effective multilateralism. No other intergovernmental body has been entrusted with the responsibility of managing shared space and resources for the benefit of all humanity.

Tasked with organizing and controlling activities in the Area, protecting the marine environment, and promoting marine scientific research, ISA serves as a fundamental pillar of ocean governance. In its role as Trustee of the Area and its resources, ISA has established a sound regulatory framework for exploration and exploitation activities. Through the collective efforts of its member states, ISA has approved 31 exploration contracts with 22 contractors, demonstrating its commitment to responsible management.

Current Challenges and the Future of Ocean Governance

While we celebrate these achievements, we must also acknowledge the challenges confronting global maritime cooperation. Faith in multilateralism is waning, leading to a resurgence of unilateral actions and increased polarization. The integrity and strength of UNCLOS and its implementing agreements are being tested. To withstand these pressures, we must reaffirm our commitment to the principles of solidarity, equity, and peaceful use of the oceans.

ISA has consistently demonstrated its commitment to these principles. It has implemented a robust regulatory framework, prioritized environmental protection, and fostered scientific research and capacity development. ISA has also established strategic partnerships with various organizations, further strengthening its role in global ocean governance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the future of our oceans depends on our collective action. UNCLOS, its implementing agreements, and the work of institutions like ISA provide a solid foundation for global maritime cooperation. By upholding the principles enshrined in these frameworks, we can ensure the sustainable management of our oceans and the equitable sharing of their benefits for generations to come.

Let us seize this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to collaborative action and ensure a healthy and prosperous future for our oceans.

I thank you very much.
