

Honourable Minister,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this workshop on “Advancing Caribbean Blue Economy through Deep Sea Research.” This workshop is co-organized by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy hosted by the University of West Indies Five Island Campus, and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

It is also a particular honour for me to be in Antigua for the second time this year. I was last here for the SIDS Conference in May, when I also took the opportunity to sign a letter of cooperation with the University of West Indies. I am delighted to see that the first joint capacity development activity has been organized so efficiently and in such a short time.

This workshop is a unique opportunity to discuss the future of marine scientific research with highly qualified experts from the

CARICOM region and how it can drive blue economy frameworks and policies.

Marine scientific research is not simply a curiosity-driven endeavour; it plays a critical role in the responsible management of our ocean and its resources. It is also essential in developing rigorous frameworks and policies for the blue economy.

The ISA is tasked with promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the Area. The ISA is also responsible for coordinating and disseminating the results of this research.

This responsibility entrusted to the ISA underscores the critical role marine scientific research plays in sustainably managing the ocean and its resources.

The ISA's mandate includes ensuring that activities in the Area are environmentally sustainable and commercially viable.

Understanding the deep-sea environment and its ecosystems is vital to informing the decision-making process to achieve this.

However, many developing States parties to the Convention, including Caribbean Big Ocean States (BOS), face barriers to

accessing and participating in marine scientific research in the Area. This limits their ability to fully plan and benefit from the potential of their blue economies.

The recently adopted Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) emphasizes the potential of science, technology, and innovation as drivers for development. The ABAS also recognizes that science and technology can boost innovation and provide BOS with the means to implement their blue economy agendas. As the trustee of the common heritage of humankind, the ISA has a responsibility to break down these barriers and unlock the potential of deep-sea research to advance blue economies.

To fulfill this responsibility, the ISA must provide tailored capacity development programmes and activities that enable developing States to engage in the work being done.

Over the last eight years, during my tenure as Secretary-General, I have made every effort to ensure that capacity development became an essential component of the ISA's mandate.

The ISA's capacity development strategy, adopted in 2022, is based on the key principle that all capacity development actions should be meaningful, tangible, effective, and, most importantly, targeted at the needs of developing States.

This workshop brings together representatives from eleven CARICOM States to engage in focused discussions. These discussions will analyze the current state of marine scientific research in the Area in Caribbean Member States and identify priority capacity development needs.

The workshop is expected to enhance the capacity of Caribbean Member States to carry out or participate in marine scientific research in the Area. This will ensure their full participation in the work of ISA and contribute to the development of sustainable blue economies. Ultimately, this workshop will lead to the adoption of a Caribbean Big Ocean States roadmap to support capacity development for marine scientific research in the Area between now and 2030.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for their warm hospitality, particularly the Hon. Min.

Anthony Smith Jr. and H.E. Dwight Gardiner. Thank you to the Principal of the University of West Indies – Five Islands Campus for hosting us on this beautiful campus.

I would also like to thank the host country of ISA, Jamaica, represented today by H.E. Angella Comfort. The Government and people of Jamaica have generously supported the work and mandate of ISA for the past 30 years.

Finally, I commend the vision of the Board of the ISA Partnership Fund, established in 2023. The Board's decision to approve funding for this project to advance the Caribbean Blue Economy through Deep Sea Research has made this workshop possible.

Thank you