



Secretariat

28 November 2024

Secretary-General's bulletin

To: Members of the staff

From: The Secretary-General

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "K. S. S.", is placed over the text "The Secretary-General".

Subject: **Terms of Reference for the International Seabed Authority Gender Equality Task Team**

The Secretary-General, for the purposes of establishing an ISA Gender Equality Task Team, promulgates the following:

Section 1 Background

1.1 The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is the organization through which States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea shall organize and control activities in the Area. The Secretariat is one of the principal organs of the ISA.

1.2 Recognizing the persistent gender inequalities and the limited progress in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, an ISA Gender Equality Task Team is established to help drive meaningful change. A dedicated team will ensure gender considerations are prioritized in all aspects of the business of ISA.

1.3 At programmatic level, over the past eight years, ISA has made significant efforts to achieve the full, equal, meaningful, and effective participation of women in deep-sea research and related fields. This includes targeted measures to advance empowerment and leadership of women deep-sea scientists, particularly from developing States, in the form of programmes such as the Women in Deep Sea Research (WIDSR) Project and measures to ensure that half of placements under ISA training programmes are allocated to qualified women candidates.

1.4 At the level of the Secretariat, gender parity has been reached, including at the senior management level, and several specific policies have been promulgated to support women staff members and to promote gender equality. Other policies and frameworks, such as on sexual harassment, gender accountability and gender mainstreaming are lacking, in the sense that policies specific to the Secretariat have not yet been developed.

Section 2

Purpose

2.1 The Task Team will champion gender equality and the empowerment of women in all their diversities within ISA's operations and programmes. This includes advocating for change, providing technical expertise, and ensuring accountability for gender equality commitments.

Section 3

Objectives

Develop and implement a Gender Equality Strategy:

3.1 The Task Team will develop a comprehensive Gender Equality Strategy that outlines the organization's vision, goals, and actions for promoting gender equality. This strategy will be aligned with global frameworks and national policies on gender equality, such as the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy. The Strategy will include a costed action plan with measurable outcomes and institutional effectiveness plans.

Mainstream Gender in Programmes and Operations:

3.2 The Task Team will work to integrate gender considerations into all aspects of ISA's policies, programs, and operations. This includes establishing structures and processes to support effective gender mainstreaming.

Capacity Building:

3.3 The Task Team will conduct capacity-building initiatives for staff members to enhance their understanding of gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and the practical application of these principles in their work. This may involve recommending trainings, workshops, and knowledge-sharing sessions.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

3.4 The Task Team will establish a robust monitoring and reporting framework to track progress, measure impact, and ensure accountability for gender equality commitments. The Task Team will also monitor the delivery of gender commitments within ISA, highlighting changes, results, good practices, and gaps.

Scope:

3.5 The Task Team's work will encompass all areas of ISA's operations, including programme design and implementation, human resources, and partnerships. It will focus on both internal organizational practices and the external impact of ISA's work.

Section 4

Membership

4.1 The Task Team will comprise:

- (a) Senior Management Representative (Task Team Lead)
- (b) Gender Focal Points from different departments
- (c) External Gender Experts (optional and subject to resource availability).

Section 5
Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Task Team Lead: Provide overall leadership and direction to the Task Team.

5.2 Members: Actively participate in Task Team meetings, contribute to the development and implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, and champion gender equality within their respective departments.

Section 6
Meetings and Reporting

6.1 The Task Team will meet regularly (e.g., monthly or quarterly) to discuss progress, address challenges, and make decisions.

6.2 The Task Team will report to the Secretary-General on a regular basis, providing updates on progress, challenges, and recommendations. It will also produce an annual Gender Accountability Framework Report to monitor progress towards commitments and provide recommendations for improvement.

Section 7
Resources

7.1 ISA will provide resources to support the Task Team's work, including:

- (a) Financial resources for activities and initiatives, such as external consultancy (within budgetary limits)
- (b) Staff time and capacity
- (c) Access to relevant information and data.

Section 8
Timeline

8.1 The Task Team will be established for an initial period of two years. The Gender Equality Strategy will be developed and launched within nine months. The Task Team's mandate and activities will be reviewed and evaluated periodically to ensure alignment with the evolving needs and priorities of ISA.

9. The present bulletin shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.

(Signed) Michael W. Lodge
Secretary-General
