



Part II of the 31st Session of the International Seabed Authority


Legal and Technical Commission

Opening Remarks by

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Distinguished Members of the Legal and Technical Commission,
Colleagues and friends,
Good morning, and welcome back to Kingston.

It is a real pleasure to see this Commission reconvene for the second part of the thirty-first session, here at the Authority's home in Jamaica.

Allow me to first express my sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Jamaica for their continued support as host country of the International Seabed Authority.

Allow me, as well, to thank each of you for your continued commitment to the work of the Authority, and for the time, expertise and care that you bring to this Commission.

I am also pleased to note that all members who requested support through the Voluntary Trust Fund are able to join us for this session. This matters. The full participation of members, including those from developing States, is essential to the quality, legitimacy and inclusiveness of the Commission's

work. I extend sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the Fund and helped make this participation possible.

Dear colleagues,

The work of this Commission is increasingly central to the credibility and effectiveness of the International Seabed Authority.

As I have said before, the LTC is the technical backbone of this institution. The impact of our decisions rests on the rigor, independence and quality of your assessments. Complex governance, which I am sure we can all agree is the reality of a mission as comprehensive and ambitious as ours, demands

confidence and trust. That confidence and trust are built through consistent, objective and iterative judgment. Your work provides this foundation.

It may be an understatement to say that we meet at an important moment.

I believe that the framework established under the Convention is under closer scrutiny than at any point in its history, including from those who would propose to see activities in the Area proceed outside the multilateral system the Convention created.

In this context, the Authority, more than ever, must demonstrate that the system established under the Convention works and is fit for purpose - *now* - and as an upcoming regulator. We must show that activities in the Area are

organized and controlled through multilateral processes; that decisions are grounded in law and rules-based order, science and due process; and that the effective protection of the marine environment remains at the heart of our work -- both because we care and because it is the only path that can truly deliver on the promise of the common heritage of humankind for ours and future generations.

The upholding of this promise is precisely what your assessments provide.

At the same time, ocean governance under UNCLOS continues to mature, from the deep seabed to the shallows, including with the entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement. Within this evolving framework, the Authority holds a

clear and distinct mandate with respect to activities in the Area, and it is your independent work that keeps that mandate anchored in sound science, legal clarity and technical integrity.

It goes without saying that we are not starting from zero. For more than thirty years, the Authority has been building the legal, scientific and institutional foundations required to govern activities in the Area before commercial exploitation begins. This is one of the distinctive features of the regime established under the Convention: governance is being built to guide activity, not merely to respond to it.

This work also increasingly requires forward-thinking and vision. This is a crucial point. We are now in a time where technological leaps and bounds, unthinkable even a decade ago, are accelerating, becoming more economical and are transforming operations, efficiencies and outcomes across myriad industries. These advancements crosscut both scientific and technical endeavor. For activities in the deep sea, where operational challenges abound, they can be transformational for increasing understanding, and potentially, decreasing negative impacts. So, while our decisions must be cautious and responsible, we must encourage both investment and ambition in these areas.

As always, the agenda before you over the next two weeks is substantial, and it reflects the breadth of the Commission's role in supporting the Authority's mandate. First, you will continue your important work on the oversight of contractors' activities.

You will undertake the standard review of annual reports submitted by contractors, including the identification of contractors requiring specific attention. You will also consider progress of the Contractors' Training Programme and provide guidance to support its effective implementation.

This work is an essential part of the Authority's oversight function. It ensures that contractual obligations are followed carefully, that concerns are

addressed through established procedures, and that the Council receives clear, grounded and evidence-based advice.

Second, the Commission will consider several matters relating to contracts and applications.

The review of applications for the extension of exploration contracts is a key deliverable for this session.

Separately, the Commission will also continue its consideration of the application for a plan of work for exploration submitted by Impossible Metals Bahrain.

You are of course are fully aware that these matters require careful technical assessment and objective judgment, combined with clear procedures, strong documentation and consistency in the way that the Authority administers activities in the Area.

Third, and pursuant to the outcomes of the Council's discussions during its March meetings, the Commission will have to provide responses to key questions arising from its reports during the first part of the session, as well as developing a roadmap for standards and guidelines.

This work is particularly important as the Council continues its consideration of the Draft Exploitation Regulations. The Regulations alone are not sufficient.

They must be translated into robust Standards and Guidelines: practical and measurable requirements that support how data is collected, how impacts are assessed, how performance is monitored, how activities are adjusted, and how decisions are implemented.

This is what allows governance to move from intention to responsible practice.

Finally, the Commission will also continue its important work in relation to environmental protection.

This includes the review of the Environmental Impact Statement received from BGR.

You will also continue to work on Regional Environmental Management Plans. This includes reviewing the draft REMP for the Northwest Pacific Ocean and considering its release for public consultation, as well as continuing discussions on the development and review of REMPs in other priority regions.

The Commission will also discuss the steps forward for the development of environmental threshold values, as the report of the intersessional expert group will be released for stakeholder consultation by the end of July. I know that these are matters on which the Commission has already invested considerable time, expertise and careful deliberation. Their importance,

however, bears repeating. This broader body of environmental work is central to the Authority's ability to translate science into decision-making, and to approach environmental protection in a structured, measurable and precautionary manner.

It is one of the ways in which the Authority gives practical effect to Article 145 of the Convention and to its mandate to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment.

As a cross-cutting matter, the Commission will also be informed of the progress made towards the effective management of data, including the

assessment of current and future data needs and opportunities, as well as proposed recommendations for the next generation of DeepData.

Reliable, accessible, structured and well-managed data is essential to informed decision-making by the Authority. It supports the review of contractors' activities, strengthen environmental assessment and management, and help ensure that the governance of the Area remains grounded in evidence.

Taken together, the items before you demonstrate the breadth and significance of the Commission's work during this part of the session. This will

require focus, discipline and the careful exercise of the technical judgment that you, this Commission, bring to the work of the Authority.

Your vision, expertise and belief in scientific rigor are what enable this work to move forward with purpose, clarity and validation. The Secretariat stands ready to support you in every way possible throughout the coming days.

Together with the broader Secretariat team, we remain fully committed to providing the technical, policy, legal, administrative and communications support required to facilitate your work.

I am grateful to colleagues across the Secretariat who have worked to put these arrangements in place, and I thank you in advance for your

understanding and cooperation as we continue to adjust and improve how we support the work of the Authority.

On a more informal note, I am also very much looking forward to spending time with you beyond the formal proceedings. I warmly invite you to join me, members of the Finance Committee and colleagues from the Secretariat for a dinner on 7 July at 6:30 p.m.

Allow me to end by saying that institutions endure when expertise, productivity and integrity prevail. And at a moment when confidence in the regime established under the Convention depends on clarity, responsibility and due process, the Commission's rigor and independence remain essential.

Your work helps ensure that science informs not only what we know, but how we decide and what we need to know. I have no doubt that you will continue to embody these qualities in the days ahead.

Thank you for your presence here and I look forward to following your work.

