

Deep-Sea Dialogues, second edition



Deep Sea Dialogues

Second Edition

Remarks by

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Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority

Institute of Jamaica

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Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Good evening.

It is a pleasure to be with you at the end of what has been an afternoon rich with discussion, insights and areas for thought and action. I am genuinely pleased to see

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so many in our community choosing to spend a Saturday here, listening, learning and engaging; especially after some pretty intense weeks.

Let me thank our co-conveners, Oceano Azul Foundation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy, for making this second edition of the Deep-Sea Dialogues possible.

Minna, thank you for opening our proceedings and for your continued commitment to creating space for this exchange and rich conversations.

Sincere gratitude to all the speakers and panelists, and participants.

And thanks all for being champions for our ocean.

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Jonathan, thank you for welcoming us to the Institute of Jamaica, an especially fitting venue. Founded in 1879, the Institute has spent nearly a century and a half bringing literature, science and art into public life and safeguarding Jamaica's heritage.

Last but not least, I am delighted to express the Authority's appreciation to the Government and people of Jamaica, our host country since the Authority's establishment.

Today, in these rooms, you have been discussing a part of our planet that most people will never see, but whose governance concerns humankind as a whole and whose future will reflect the choices that humanity makes concerning priorities around development needs, safeguarding, multilateralism and respect for diverse voices.

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It is a privilege to be welcomed here. A dialogue is only as valuable as the willingness of people to engage honestly. This afternoon, we have heard different perspectives, but all with shared purpose. As you are all well aware, there are simple answers in this space...

I want to acknowledge, in particular, the contribution of observers and civil society organizations. Your research, expertise, questions and constructive engagement across disciplines enrich the work of the Authority. These Dialogues are a very good example, which is why I am so pleased that we are now making it a tradition.

The key messages from the first edition were subsequently brought before the Assembly, and a dedicated readout will again take place this next Thursday. I attach great importance to this. Fulfilling our mission requires spaces like this one, where

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we can exchange ideas, test assumptions and reflect beyond formal settings, and ensure that the diversity of perspectives shared here can enrich the wider deliberations of the Authority.

The organizers structured this afternoon around three key pillars that are crucial to the work of the ISA. Allow me to reflect briefly on each.

First, science.

The science session reminded us of something fundamental: sound decisions must rest on robust scientific knowledge. Advancing our understanding of the deep sea is therefore central to the work of the Authority. We must understand the gaps and then identify how to fill them, working through partnerships and leveraging resources in an

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increasingly challenging environment. This said, I would encourage this esteemed and well-connected group to make sure we are looking at how our scientific endeavor can build on all existing knowledge and support policy.

I've heard what a remarkable opportunity it was to connect live with Diva, Anna and their colleagues on the R/V *Falkor (too)* as they work to understand and describe the very environment at the centre of our deliberations.

Diva and Anna, thank you for taking us on your journey. As an oceanographer myself, I can relate to your experience: the long hours, the patience and discipline, but also the sense of discovery that makes this work so rewarding.

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The knowledge on which our decisions depend begins with scientists, undertaking this careful work, often far from public view.

I am equally proud of our very own Noemie, who presented the work of our colleagues in the Secretariat. Through its marine scientific research initiatives, the Secretariat is giving practical effect to the Authority's mandate to promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area, and to coordinate and disseminate its results.

This work is truly helping to strengthen the scientific basis for informed decision-making by Member States. Noemie, thank you.

The title of the economics session was an honest one: the knowns and unknowns of the financial equation.

Financial terms and benefit-sharing are not a technical afterthought to the Part XI regime. They are central to how the common heritage principle is translated into arrangements that are equitable, workable and durable.

Experts may reach different conclusions, but careful analysis helps Member States understand the choices before them and their long-term implications. As we know, we are working with managing uncertainty across all disciplines because we are in uncharted waters. Having the hard talks about pros and cons, political winds and practical realities is therefore crucial.

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On governance, the historical perspective reminded us that the framework within which we work was the product of painstaking negotiation and political compromise throughout decades.

It was built with foresight, but it must also be applied in a world that continues to change, now at seemingly warp speed. Our responsibility is to remain faithful to the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, while taking full account of contemporary scientific knowledge and relevant legal and institutional developments.

This is never simple. But that is precisely why historical and institutional memory matters.

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Taken together, the three sessions remind us of the nature of the task before the Authority and its decision-making bodies.

The Authority is the institution through which States Parties organize and control activities in the Area on behalf of humankind as a whole. This responsibility inevitably brings difficult questions and different starting points to our table.

Consensus is built over time: through formal negotiations, bilateral exchanges, technical work and conversations such as this one.

I firmly believe that dialogue strengthens the intergovernmental process by helping us listen more carefully, test ideas against evidence and better understand where

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differences remain. This is how we move towards outcomes that are more considered and durable.

After a day devoted to science, economics and governance, it is fitting that we now turn to the cultural dimension that runs through them all, with a reception on underwater cultural heritage and the wider cultural dimension of the deep sea, hosted by TBA21, the Institute of Jamaica and National Museum Jamaica.

I hope you will stay with us, hear the voices gathered for this evening, and continue the conversation in the same open spirit.

Let me close by reiterating how much I personally value these Dialogues, and you my dedicated colleagues. I hope you will all continue to widen the circle, bringing

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together delegates, observers, scientists, academics, civil society and the private sector.

To the co-organizers, congratulations on a thoughtful and successful second edition.

I look forward to the third and to many more after that.

Thank you.