



**Launch of the New Era of the See Her Exceed (SHE) Programme
Opening Remarks by**

**Madam Leticia Carvalho
Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority**

Kingston, Jamaica, 27 July 2026



His Excellency Mr. Surangel Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau

Her Excellency Ms. Sheila Sealy Monteith, CD, JP, Ambassador,
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade,
Jamaica

His Excellency Mr. Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the
International Maritime Organization,

Distinguished delegates, colleagues, friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon, and welcome to a celebration.

Three years ago, SHE --See Her Exceed-- was an ambitious idea: a mentorship programme to bring more women experts from developing States into deep-sea research. Today, it is a global platform. And it is entering a new era.

As a woman scientist and member of the International Gender Champions network, this programme is obviously close to my heart.

Last July, in this very hall, we celebrated the graduation of our first cohort: six mentees, guided by mentors from the Global North and South. Two of

them are with us this evening: Ms. Mpho Sehlabo of South Africa, and Ms. Orji Ijeoma of Nigeria. Welcome!

Together with their mentors, the cohort turned its research into a practical framework to promote the safe participation of women in activities at sea. Tonight, Mpho and Orji stand here on behalf of them all.

I emphasize the word *safe* deliberately. I have taken part in research expeditions myself, including cruises with Ifremer, and I know that safety at sea is fundamental, for women and men alike. Too often, women step

back from opportunities at sea not for lack of competence, but because the systems around them were never built with them in mind.

Today, we do something about the systems.

But before diving into the substance, let me take a moment to thank the co-hosts of this event: the Republic of France, whose unwavering support from the very outset has been instrumental to the success of this programme, and the Kingdom of Belgium whose generous financial contribution will support the next phase of this important initiative. Your partnership demonstrates what committed Member State support can

achieve. As SHE enters this new era, I warmly invite other Member States to join them in supporting the programme. We will hear from France and Belgium in our upcoign panel.

We are launching three initiatives, and together, they take SHE from a successful mentorship programme to a platform for leadership and lasting institutional change.

First, the SHE Gender Compact. What began as the Compact drafted by our pilot cohort has grown, through consultation with members of the Legal and Technical Commission, our observers and our contractors, into

a shared voluntary framework for the whole ocean community: seven key action areas to promote the safe participation of women at sea. It is a living document, and my team will support its practical application.

There are two ways to participate. You may join as a Champion, promoting the Compact across your networks. Or as an Implementing Partner committing your institution to implement at least two of its action areas, suited to your role and capacities.

I am delighted that France, Belgium, Portugal, and The Cook Islands are already showing the way as Champions, and India is both a champion and

implementing partner. I welcome early adopters, four contractors: Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea, Indian Ministry of Earth Sciences and the Cook Islands Investment Corporation. Additionally, the Jamaican branch of the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association, WISTA, a new partner for ISA, is on board. WISTA International and the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative have expressed support.

Second, SHE Law of the Sea, extending mentorship beyond science into legal and policy leadership, to strengthen the participation of women legal experts in ocean governance.

Third, the second phase of our scientific track SHE Science will establish an international community of practice for women experts from developing countries working on cumulative impact assessment, one of the most demanding frontiers of ocean science. We are building the scientific basis for it in collaboration with the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection. This scoping activity is co-sponsored with the International Maritime Organization, with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea --- proof that this agenda now belongs to the whole UN ocean family.

Thirty years from now, someone else will stand where I stand today.

Perhaps she is in this room. Perhaps we have already met her. My hope for her is simple: that she will not be the first anything, just the best person for the job.

Thank you, and I wish you an inspiring event

[Stage direction: Opening remarks by other high-level officials and presentation by the SHE mentees.]

Thank you very much, Mpho and Orji. I was deeply moved by what you shared.

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It takes courage, especially as young professionals, to stand before senior officials and experts and speak clearly about what needs to change. You did that today.

You joined SHE as mentees. Today, you spoke as experts. With the rest of the cohort, you turned what you learned and experienced into practical guidance to make participation at sea safer for other women.

As a woman scientist who has worked at sea, this means a great deal to me.

I am proud of you both, and of the entire first SHE cohort. Thank you.

[Stage direction: Noemie takes the floor to introduce and moderate the high-level panel, then passes the floor to MSG.]

Thank you, Noemie.

Before we close, let me thank all our high-level guests and speakers for joining us and for the perspectives and commitments you shared today.

I want to recognize in particular the Ambassador of France, who has supported SHE from the very beginning, and warmly welcome the Ambassador of Belgium to the SHE Coalition. Your partnership has helped bring us to this point.

I also thank the members of the Legal and Technical Commission, our partners, observers, contractors and every stakeholder who contributed to the consultation process. Your experience and practical input helped transform the original Charter into a Compact for the wider ocean community.

My thanks also to the Champions and Implementing Partners of the SHE Compact. The Compact will only make a difference if it is put into practice, and your commitment is what will move it forward.

Finally, thank you to my colleagues in the Secretariat. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, and today would not have been possible without you.

I now invite our speakers and the SHE Compact Champions and Implementing Partners to join me for a photograph.

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