



**Thirty-Four Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations
Convention on the Law of the Sea**

-General of

10 June 2024

Statement by H. E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge,
Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

It is a pleasure as always to present information about the work of the International Seabed Authority to the thirty-fourth meeting of States Parties to the Convention. Particularly as this year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and by extension, the beginning of the work of the Authority.

Allow me at the outset to offer my congratulations to you Mr President on your election. It is a great pleasure to see you in this position and I trust that your leadership will guide efficiently the discussions of this meeting.

I also wish to thank Ambassador Cornel Feruta of Romania for his work during the past year and in particular his support for the work of the Authority.

I would also like to extend a special word of gratitude and appreciation to the Legal Counsel

as he prepares to step down from his role. Throughout his tenure, he has been a stalwart supporter of the rule of law in the ocean, and the integrity of the Convention and the institutions established by the Convention. As Secretary-General, I have personally benefited from his wisdom and experience and we have always enjoyed an excellent working

Although individual States Parties and observers in some cases, have expressed different positions regarding any possible future activities in the Area, the vast majority of States Parties have expressed their commitment to continue the negotiations in good faith, recognizing the need to work effectively and diligently towards a strong and comprehensive legal framework as mandated by the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

Guided by the roadmap it adopted in 2022 and revised in July 2023, the Council has continued its discussions on the draft exploitation regulations.

A major step forward was the release in February 2024 of a revised and consolidated text of the draft regulations, under the authority of the President of the twenty-eighth session. This was in line with the agreed road map and was designed to identify and remedy areas of overlap, duplication, and omission in what had become a very complex text. It also sought to harmonize the text both internally and with the language of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

During the first part of the twenty-ninth session, the Council, under its new Presidency, began a complete reading of the consolidated text. The Council also considered several important thematic issues in informal working groups led by facilitators and rapporteurs. The intention of the Presidency is to continue that work in July, with the aim of completing the entire text and avoiding repetition.

I would like to make several observations about the progress of work and the working methodology in the Council.

First, all discussions on the draft regulations have taken place in conditions of the utmost transparency. From the outset, the Council has held all discussions on the regulations in informal session, open to all members of the Authority and observers. Nobody can legitimately claim to have been excluded.

Second, at every stage, the Council has invited the broadest possible range of input into the development of the regulations, including in the form of written proposals. Over 1,500 written proposals have been submitted, all of which are published on the ISA website and incorporated into a compilation document. Of course, this also means that it is impossible to implement every individual idea and proposal, but this does not prevent delegations and observers from addressing proposals as they may deem necessary, since all proposals have been consistently published.

Third, the use of informal working groups has contributed greatly to the development of the text, especially on more technical matters such as the system for royalties and payments, underwater cultural heritage, mechanisms for stakeholder consultation, and the processes for environmental impact assessment. These groups are playing an important role in advancing the work and making sincere efforts to find compromise solutions between the interested delegations.

Fourth, it remains the consistent understanding that the draft regulations constitute a complete package. From the beginning, the Council has worked on the basis that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

I believe that the Council is making good progress and is building consensus around many of the critical outstanding issues in the draft regulations. As always, the Secretariat stands ready to support the work of the Council. In this regard, it is anticipated that at the forthcoming resumed session in July, the Council will assess its progress and consider and adopt a revised roadmap to guide its remaining work as it approaches the endpoint agreed in 2022.

Updates on exploration activities carried out in the Area

Let me now provide the meeting with a brief update on the general status of activities in the Area.

There are currently 30 active exploration projects worldwide, in the form of plans of work

approved by the Authority. Sixteen of these are in the prime nodule region of the Clarion

Therefore, I now wish to move on to comment on the implementation of other parts of the Authority's mandate over the stewardship of the Area and its resources, particularly with respect to the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area, the

contained in DeepData, novel taxonomic techniques, and to develop a scientific approach for identifying key deep-sea data relevant to environmental impact assessments and monitoring programmes.

In September 2023, on the margins of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit, here in New York, I launched a global call for action to accelerate progress under the 2030 Agenda in the areas of deep-sea research, technology and innovation.

This call for action aims at advancing collective action around four key priorities: (i) increasing investments in science and technology, (ii) aligning relevant research agendas with the MSR Action Plan as the global deep-sea research agenda, (iii) promoting deep-sea literacy, and (iv) leveraging the Authority's experiences in support of the implementation of the new 2023 implementing agreement under the Convention.

I am grateful to Argentina, Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Fiji, Jamaica, Malta, Mauritius, Nauru, Norway, Singapore, Tonga, and the UK for so far joining the call for action and I look forward to seeing more support in the coming weeks.

Capacity Development

The second aspect of the work of the Authority that I would like to emphasise is in relation to capacity development.

A great deal of progress has been made in the implementation of the capacity development strategy of the Authority adopted in 2022. Since 1994, more than 1,000 individuals have benefited from capacity development initiatives implemented by the Authority. The activities that have been developed in recent years have been informed by the capacity needs assessment undertaken in 2020 and we are extremely proud of the results achieved.

The nomination of National Focal Points for capacity development plays a very important role in that regard, both in disseminating information about capacity development opportunities as well as in providing feedback to the Secretariat. I express my appreciation to

the 60 States that have so far appointed a National Focal Point and I encourage others to join this group and participate in the regular meetings that are held.

This year, the Authority launched several important new initiatives.

In January this year, we opened the first ever Joint Training and Research Centre for Africa and the Middle East, in Alexandria, Egypt.

Just last month, I had the pleasure to open the first ever African Academy for Deep Sea Diplomacy, hosted by Cameroon at its Diplomatic Academy in Yaounde.

Both of these initiatives were led by the African Group in the Authority and represent the culmination of many years of hard work.

Similarly, two weeks ago, I was delighted to launch a new partnership with the Caribbean Region in the margins of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS, hosted by the Centre of Excellence for the Blue Economy at the University of the West Indies campus in Antigua and Barbuda.

The progress we have made in capacity development has been significantly boosted by the establishment of the ISA Partnership Fund, approved by the Assembly in 2022. I am pleased to inform you that in one year, the Partnership Fund has allocated more than \$1 million to 11 different projects to advance the global deep-sea research agenda, enhance women's empowerment and leadership in deep-sea research, innovation and build the capacity of developing States, particularly LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the contributions to the Partnership Fund made by Greece, Mexico, France, Monaco, the Russian Federation and Spain.

I am also pleased to inform that in July 2023, the Authority launched **Deep Dive**, its new e-

learning platform dedicated to addressing legal, technical and scientific aspects of the regime set out in the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. This platform aims to enhance the capacity of government officials and practitioners from States Parties, young graduates, personnel of par

Building on 30 years of experience and practice in effectively regulating activities in the Area and managing the common heritage of humankind, the Authority stands ready to bring its added value to support the implementation of the Agreement.

It is in this spirit that I have commissioned an independent report on the contribution of the Authority to the new agreement, which we will have the pleasure to launch tomorrow (room

for the common good. My admiration for them and my faith in them have never been so high and I thank all States Parties which have expressed their support for the very hard tasks assumed by the Secretariat over time.

Thank you.