

**Presentation by  
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Jamaica to the International Seabed Authority (ISA)  
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*"The critical importance of ongoing deep-sea research and science in ensuring the sustainable management of the Area and its resources"*

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I wish to commend the International Seabed Authority (ISA) for spearheading this reflection process on the critical importance of ongoing deep-sea research and science in ensuring the sustainable management of the Area and its resources. These discussions are especially timely as we transition from exploration of the Area to preparing for the collection of minerals and deep seabed resources to support the realization of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indeed the ISA's Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan for 2019-2023, have ensured this alignment.

From Jamaica's perspective, as a sponsoring State with constraints in our scientific and technological capabilities, there are three (3) fundamental issues related to deep-sea research and science on which I would like us to reflect. These are:

1. Scientific exploration and knowledge production for the benefit of humanity;
2. Strategic deep-sea ecosystems management; and
3. The ISA's role in ensuring the sustainability of deep-seabed mineral collection to support the UN 2030 Agenda.

### **Scientific Exploration and Knowledge Production**

- With respect to deep-sea research and science, generally, it is imperative that exploration continues to advance scientific knowledge about the Area for the benefit of humanity as a whole. This will be crucial for closing the scientific and knowledge gap between advanced and developing countries, including through the robust sharing of expertise and information on scientific discoveries, as well as ensuring the accessibility of oceans data.
- There are still major knowledge gaps in deep-sea biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and vulnerabilities, in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ). Yet we are encouraged that recent technological advances such as the development of state-of-the-art deep-sea vehicles have now made possible scientific investigations into novel life forms, and mineral resources that could benefit the renewable energy, transportation, and pharmaceuticals sectors.

- As we embark on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Jan 1 2021- Dec 31 2030), this has presented the deep-sea research community with an exceptional opportunity to collaboratively advance our shared understanding of deep-sea ecosystems and their potential services to society, as well as how to sustainably harness marine mineral resources in the Area to advance our sustainable development.

## **Deep-sea Research and Science and the Sustainable Use of Seabed Minerals in the Area**

Ladies and gentlemen,

- If extracted in an environmentally sustainable manner, resources found in the deep seabed such as nickel, copper, manganese and cobalt, have the potential to support emerging pathways to clean renewable energy and limit global warming in line with the Paris Agreement.
- However, for this to materialize, the scientific development and integration of monitoring techniques, modelling and prediction tools, imaging, and low cost technologies, into exploration of the Area, will be necessary to ensure that seabed minerals are gathered and used in a sustainable manner based on deep-sea environmental impact assessments (EIAs).
- Furthermore, as a sponsoring State, Jamaica is committed to leveraging the Blue economy in support of Vision 2030- Our National Development Plan. We view this as a new pathway to offsetting the financing of mounting climatic risks and associated adaptation needs, fiscal deficits, and declining accesses to development finance as a middle income country (MIC). However, we are cognizant of the fact that this will only be possible if the deep-sea scientific community executes a research agenda on the sustainable use of seabed minerals that is adequately financed, supports evidence-based decision-making, and includes developing countries that presently do not have the technical capacity to independently undertake scientific research in the Area.

## **ISA Stewardship of Deep-sea Ecosystems Management to support the UN 2030 Agenda**

Ladies and gentlemen,

- As we transition from exploration to preparing for the collection of these resources, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) will play an increasingly important

regulatory role in advancing global understanding and knowledge of the deep-sea and its ecosystems pursuant to its mandate in UNCLOS. Perhaps, more importantly, this regulatory responsibility must ensure that deep-seabed mineral collection in the Area is aligned with our collective obligation under the UN 2030 Agenda, and SDG 14 in particular, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

- There is a lot that we do not know about deep-sea ecosystems and how activity in the deep sea could affect them. We do, however, know that deep-sea species are unlikely to be as resilient to collection of these resources with possible resulting disturbances or pollution. In this regard, I wish to underscore the need for the ISA to ensure that its development of a Mining Code contains stringent environmental requirements, clear guidance for contractors, and remains agile and responsive to current deep-sea research and new scientific knowledge.
- Critical to ensuring this, will be the research necessary to understand biodiversity connectivity across large marine ecosystems and the establishment of biodiversity/conservation corridors in the Area. In this regard, complementarity between the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and UNCLOS should be explored. Recognizing the need to better understand the potential impact in the Area on biodiversity, ISA Members States, like Jamaica, should also continue to advocate for the adoption of a legally binding treaty to conserve and protect marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

## **Conclusion**

In concluding, I wish to underscore that deep-sea research and science must serve humanity as a whole, and support our sustainable development in line with the UN 2030 Agenda. As the common heritage of mankind, the Area's exploration and commercial activity in the collection of minerals must be underpinned by the spirit of 'leave no State behind', as we strive to strengthen deep-sea research and science. Let us be clear on the task before us – We have, in short, to balance our economic interests in the deep-seabed with the effective protection and conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity in the Area.

Thank you.