



**Statement by H.E. Amb. Mathu Joyini  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations  
at the  
International Seabed Authority (ISA) joint HLPF side event  
on  
“Ensuring the sustainable management and stewardship of the deep-seabed and  
its resources for the benefit of all humanity”**

**July 13 2021,  
(Virtual)**

**Statement focus: The critical importance of ongoing deep-sea research and science in ensuring the sustainable management of the Area and its resources**

Thank you, Moderator

South Africa is pleased to be a co-sponsor of this side event. We are part of it as we believe in the work that the ISA is doing in carrying the mandate given to it by the Convention.

It is ISA's mandate to provide for a legal regime governing the exploitation of resources and protection of the marine environment.

We believe ISA has gone a long way in addressing this mandate, and we appreciate the independent study that has been commissioned to look into how the Authority in carrying out its mandate, has contributed to the development agenda and the various sustainable development goals including goal 14. The outcome of the study should be an interesting one, pointing to the advances in the work that ISA has done but also pointing to areas that need to be strengthened. Through its Strategic Plan, the High-level plan and voluntary commitments, ISA has contributed to a number of SDGs in a meaningful way.

Coming to marine scientific research, the role of ocean science in furthering the 2030 agenda for sustainable development is well recognized, and indeed it is ISA's mission to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the international seabed area, and especially to facilitate effective participation by developing states in deep-sea exploration and research programmes.

We acknowledge that the Authority has taken this mandate on Marine Scientific research as outlined in article 143 of the Convention to heart.

To enable it to fulfil the research mandate with limited resources, ISA has initiated many programmes amongst them are the following:

- Partnerships with various institutions and contractors to advance Marine Scientific research
- ISA's Public Deep Seabed and Ocean databases (Deep Data), which is largely populated by data from contractors and their scientists
- Taxonomic standardization and environmental data collection protocols to ensure data integrity and comparability
- The ISA Secretary General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea research
- The women in Deep-Sea Research Project

Despite these interventions, we still don't know everything we need to know about the marine environment in the area. This is more the reason why ongoing marine scientific research is necessary, especially in light of mining exploitation which will become a reality soon.

Allow me to make the following 5 points:

1. According to the 2021 IEA report on the role of critical minerals in clean energy transition, The decarbonisation agenda will increase demand for specific minerals. This demand can be met from terrestrial mining, but will certainly increase the urgency for seabed mining. The question is do we know enough about the impact of this on the marine environment. There will be a need for continued research.
2. In the space of research, South Africa believes more can be done to increase the number of Marine Scientific researchers from the African continent. There is a need to establish collaboration and partnerships with Scientific Research Councils and Universities in that part of the world. These partnerships will not only ensure quality researchers and students but will inspire joint research programmes.
3. With regard to Capacity Building, a lot has been done by the Authority through partnerships to deliver capacity building for developing states. Further work was done to ensure that the programmes are informed by the needs of the developing states and are defined by the states themselves. The Abyssal Project and the Africa Deep Seabed Resources Project with NORAD and AU are two good examples. For South Africa, SG you have supported us when we approached ISA to conduct a Sensitization programme in Pretoria 2013, for the SADC region, and again in 2019, with a workshop on the promotion of sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources in support to Africa's Blue Economy. We simultaneously hosted ISA's workshop on the development of standards and guidelines for the draft mining code. However, a question has to be asked. We have seen concrete and admirable results of the Abyssal project, the same cannot be said for the African region. For your part, you have delivered the capacity building programme, but we have not moved. It is South Africa's considered view that there needs to be a closer look into why this is the case. It would be in the interest of ISA and the Africa region to dig deeper to understand why, and we recommend a study for this.

4. Linked to the above point, another question should be asked. To what extent does the lack of enthusiasm for the operationalization of the Enterprise affect the interest and ability of African States to participate in activities in the area? It is a fact that participating in activities in the area, be it research or exploration is unaffordable for most of the developing states.

Operationalization of the Enterprise, therefore, becomes important and urgent. And will ensure that we are not only considering the interests of the developed countries, but we are in a concrete way ensuring that the capacity building offered is practically implemented and is meaningful.

5. The fifth and last point is linked to article 150(h) of the Convention, that looks at the adverse impact on countries producing the same minerals on land. The majority of these countries are developing States. Again, work on this particular article is critical. Not addressing article 150(h), will practically mean we contribute negatively to SDG 1, No Poverty.

To conclude, the International Seabed Authority has put in place a clear strategy to comprehensively address its mandate over the next 3 years, and indeed the 2030 agenda and it has to be commended for its voluntary commitments.

The interests of the developed world in terms of alternative sources of mineral resources should be satisfied, but not at the expense of the developing countries. What is needed is to build on the good work of ensuring inclusion of the developing countries and taking into account their interests. The operationalisation of the Enterprise and the work on article 150 (h) will do precisely that, ensuring that we leave no one behind. South Africa reassures its commitment and support to the ISA and the excellent work it does.

I thank you.