

**Joint side event by the International Seabed Authority,  
Cook Islands, Ghana, Jamaica, Korea, Malta, Mauritius,  
Norway, Singapore, South Africa and IFREMER (France)**

**“Ensuring the sustainable management and stewardship  
of the deep-seabed and its resources for the benefit of  
all humanity”**

**Opening Address by Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares  
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and  
United Nations Legal Counsel**

13 July 2021, 1:00pm

[Honourable Minister],  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to reflect today on a matter of considerable importance, *ensuring the sustainable management and stewardship of the deep-seabed and its resources for the benefit of all humanity*, and on the vital role of the International Seabed Authority in this regard. I wish to

thank the organizers of this side event for kindly inviting me to address this important subject.

Let me start by recalling that the General Assembly of the United Nations has consistently recognized the pre-eminent contribution of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples of the world and to the sustainable development of the ocean and seas. The Convention is recognized by the General Assembly as setting out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. It provides legal certainty by clearly identifying the rights and obligations of States and competent international organizations within the various maritime zones.

The Convention endeavours to strike a balance between the need for economic and social development through the use of the ocean and its resources, the need to conserve and manage those resources in a sustainable manner and the need to protect and preserve the marine environment. In this sense, it embodies the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – and sets forth the legal framework for the sustainable development of the oceans and seas.

As such, the Convention has an underpinning role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". This is fully recognized in target 14.c of Goal 14, which speaks of enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the Convention. The effective implementation of the Convention and its implementing agreements is, therefore, an essential basis for the achievement of Goal 14, as well as of related Sustainable Development Goals.

Excellencies,

The three pillars of sustainable development are also markedly reflected in Part XI of the Convention, as complemented by the 1994 implementation Agreement. First and foremost, pursuant to Part XI, the Area and its resources are the common heritage of mankind. Accordingly, States are to use the Area exclusively for peaceful purposes and share the benefits of activities therein, with all rights in the resources of the Area being vested in humankind as a whole. Fostering healthy development of the world economy and promoting international cooperation for the overall development of all countries, especially developing States, is at the core of the policies relating to activities in the Area.

At the same time, Part XI of the Convention requires that necessary measures be taken to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities in the Area. The same applies to measures ensuring effective protection of human life with respect to activities in the Area.

The Authority, as the organization through which States Parties organize and control activities in the Area, particularly with a view to administering its resources, bears a fundamental responsibility in the implementation of Part XI and the Agreement and in upholding the common heritage of mankind through the rules, regulations and procedures it adopts and other activities.

It is therefore my pleasure to join you today to take stock of the contribution of the Authority to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Significant steps forward have been made by the Authority in the further development of the law of the sea, the achievement of the goals of the Convention and the sustainable development of the ocean and its resources. I should highlight, in particular, the progress made in developing the regulatory framework for activities in the Area, with the ongoing development of the draft exploitation regulations. Work is also ongoing on options

for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area. Notable other initiatives include the development of regional environmental management plans and the promotion of marine scientific research, including women's participation therein.

I wish you productive discussions.