



Contribution of the International Seabed Authority to the UN Ocean Conference

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The International Seabed Authority (ISA) actively contributed to the work and discussions of the UN Ocean Conference, held in New York, from 5 to 9 June 2017. On this occasion, the ISA provided inputs to several Partnerships Dialogues and side events in relation to the sustainable management of deep-seabed related activities and resources. There was also the opportunity to draw the attention of the audience to the potential benefits that member States, and notably developing countries, could gain by engaging further in the activities undertaken in the Area.

INTRODUCTION

The UN General Assembly, in its resolution 70/226, decided to convene the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The UN Ocean Conference, co-hosted by the governments of Fiji and Sweden, was held at UN Headquarters in New York, from 5 to 9 June 2017, and coincided with World Oceans Day (observed annually on 8 June). The overarching theme for the Conference was: “Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14”.

The overall objectives of the UN Ocean Conference were to:

- Identify ways and means to support the implementation of SDG14;

- Build on existing successful partnerships and stimulate innovative and concrete new partnerships to advance the implementation of SDG14;
- Involve all relevant stakeholders to assess challenges and opportunities relating to, as well as actions taken towards, the implementation of SDG14;
- Share the experiences gained at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of SDG14; and
- Contribute to the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by providing input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development on the implementation of SDG14, including opportunities to strengthen progress in the future.

PLENARY MEETING and PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUES

The UN Ocean Conference comprised eight plenary meetings and seven Partnership Dialogues aimed at providing avenues for participants to address the Conference and to contribute to the discussions, particularly with a view to adopting:

- the *Call for Action* to support the implementation of SDG14 and a report containing the co-chairs' summaries of the Partnership Dialogues; and
- a list of voluntary commitments for the implementation of SDG14.

In his statement to the Plenary on 8 June 2017, the Secretary-General of the ISA highlighted the importance of the existing legal framework to enable States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to cooperate through the ISA to sustainably manage the resources of the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole. The regime for the Area may be considered one of the most forward-looking legal systems in force as it is designed to ensure equity in access to, and allocation of resources, long-term sustainability in terms of protection of the marine environment and equitable sharing of benefits. From that perspective, Secretary-General Lodge informed the participants of the strategic direction being taken by the ISA to fulfil its responsibilities as set out in UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement Relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS, to contribute to the delivery of the associated targets of SDG14.

The ISA also provided inputs to several Partnership Dialogues - notably Partnership Dialogues **5** *Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets*, **6** *Increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology*, and **7** *Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the UNCLOS*.

In his statement at Partnership Dialogue 5, Mr. Lodge emphasized the potential role that seabed mineral

PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUES

1. *Addressing marine pollution*
2. *Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems*
3. *Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification*
4. *Making fisheries sustainable*
5. *Increasing economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets*
6. *Increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology*
7. *Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*

resources could play for the development of the Blue Economy of SIDS and LLDCs. The cases of Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Singapore and Tonga were presented as remarkable examples of fruitful cooperation that enables developing countries to benefit from a wide range of opportunities to participate actively in activities undertaken in the Area.

Representing the ISA at Partnership Dialogue 6, Mr. Alfonso Ascencio-Herrera, Legal Counsel and Deputy to the Secretary-General, emphasized the contribution of ISA towards promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area. The efforts engaged by the ISA in coordinating and disseminating the results of such research for the benefit of all, particularly the developing countries, were also highlighted. The numerous and successful partnerships established over the years by the ISA to strengthen capacity-building opportunities were presented as a key asset of ISA's work.

As a panellist in Partnership Dialogue 7, Secretary-General Lodge provided participants with an overview of the legal and implementation gaps of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area. He also took the opportunity to draw attention to the challenges and needs of developing countries in terms of their participation in the activities undertaken in the Area. In his presentation, the Secretary-General, accordingly, emphasized the different partnerships established with member States, contractors, research entities and other international organizations to move this matter forward.

VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS

ISA registered **seven** voluntary commitments to contribute to the implementation of SDG14 and its associated targets.

SIDE EVENTS

The contribution of ISA also included its participation in three side events, which attracted high-level representatives of Member States, UN Agencies, international organizations, private sector representatives and civil society organizations. On 5 June 2017, the ISA participated in a side event organized by UN-Oceans (“Supporting the implementation of the ocean-related targets in the 2030 Agenda”) which provided the heads of UN agencies, and other international organizations involved in ocean affairs, with the opportunity to exchange further on the benefits of increased cooperation and improved exchange of information.

On 8 June 2017, the ISA contributed to a side event co-organized by the governments of Zambia and Switzerland and UN-OHRLS (*Enhancing the participation of the landlocked countries in the implementation of SDG 14*) where the Secretary-General reiterated the importance of the potential benefits landlocked African countries could gain by proactively participating in the activities conducted in the Area. He also emphasized the importance of landlocked African States becoming parties to UNCLOS.

On the same day, the ISA co-hosted a side event with the Kingdom of Tonga, Mexico, UN-DESA, and, with the support of the Tonga Offshore Mining Limited (TOML), to discuss on the best way for “Advancing SDG 14 and the quest for a Blue Economy through the promotion of socio-economic benefits for developing



VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS		
WHAT?	WHO?	WHEN?
<i>Enhancing the role of women in marine scientific research through capacity building</i>	ISA Member States Contractors Research Entities Academia	2017-2020 (Phase I)
<i>Encouraging dissemination of research results through the ISA Secretary-General award for Deep Sea Research Excellence</i>	ISA Research Entities Member States Contractors Academia UN Agencies	2017-2018 (Phase I)
<i>Enhancing the assessment of essential ecological functions of the deep sea oceans through long-term underwater oceanographic observatories in the Area</i>	ISA Hawaii University	2017-2020
<i>Enhancing deep sea marine biodiversity assessment through the creation of online taxonomic atlases linked to deep sea mining</i>	ISA Member States, Contractors	2017-2018
<i>Abyssal initiative for Blue Growth: advancing SDG 14 and the quest for a Blue Economy through the promotion of socio-economic benefits for developing countries, including SIDS, and increasing scientific knowledge and research capacity</i>	ISA UN-DESA	2017-2018
<i>Fostering cooperation to promote the sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources in support of Africa's Blue Economy</i>	ISA AMDC	2017-2019
<i>Mapping the Blue Economy of Africa to support decision-making, investment and governance of activities undertaken on the extended continental shelf and in adjacent international seabed areas</i>	AMDC, Grid-Arendal ISA	2017-2020



countries, including SIDS, and increasing scientific knowledge and research capacity: perspectives on deep sea mining”. In his opening address, H.E. Mr Mahe ‘Uli’uli Sandhurst Tupouniua (Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the UN) highlighted the importance accorded by Tonga to the work of the ISA. As a member and sponsoring State, the work of the ISA contributes specifically to the Kingdom’s sustainable development as a Pacific Small Island Developing State, as well as a small island, and developing country more generally. Speaking on behalf of the UN Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr Sainivalati S. Navoti (Chief, SIDS Unit, UN-DESA) emphasized the overall goal pursued by UNCLOS in the realisation of “a just and equitable international economic order which takes into account the interests and needs of humankind as a whole, in particular, the special interests and needs of developing countries, whether coastal or landlocked”. Subsequently, Mr Siosua Utoikamanu (Development economist and a Member of the Legal and Technical Commission of the ISA, Tonga) and Mr Mike Johnston (CEO, Nautilus Minerals) provided an overview of the potential socio-economic and scientific benefits for SIDS when sponsoring activities in the Area. In his presentation, Dr Patrick Ho (Vice-Chairman and

Secretary-General of the China Energy Fund Committee) offered examples of different initiatives implemented to support Blue Economy/Blue Growth in Pacific SIDS. Mr Alejandro Alday (Legal Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico) and Dr Natalia Amezcua (Servicio Geologico Mexicano) provided the large audience with concrete elements highlighting the opportunities accruing to Mexico as a result of its close cooperation with the ISA.

EXHIBITION

Throughout the week, the ISA hosted an exhibition to raise awareness on its work - *Contributing to the sustainable development of deep sea mineral resources in the Area for the benefit of mankind: the role of the International Seabed Authority*. The initiative was very well received by the participants.

PARTICIPANTS

Secretariat: Mr Michael Lodge, Mr Alfonso Ascencio-Herrera, Dr Sandor Mulsow, Mr Chapi Mwangi, Mrs Marie Bourrel-McKinnon, Ms Anna Elaise, Ms Asenaca Navoti.



The International Seabed Authority is an autonomous international organization established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Authority is the organization through which States Parties to the Convention shall, in accordance with the regime for the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (the Area) established in Part XI and the Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, particularly with a view to administering the resources of the Area.