



**THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
SEABED  
AUTHORITY**

**AT 25**  
1994 - 2019





# THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

## AT TWENTY-FIVE (1994 - 2019)

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## MISSION

The mission of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) is to be the organization through which States parties organize and control activities in the Area, which is the common heritage of mankind, to promote the orderly, safe and responsible management and development of the resources of the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole, including by ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment in accordance with sound principles of conservation and contributing to agreed international objectives and principles, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



**Michael W. Lodge**

Secretary-General, ISA

“Twenty-five years on, we can be justly proud of the many achievements of ISA. The past 25 years have provided us with a solid foundation on which to build for the future and are a demonstration of what we can accomplish when we work together with a common goal.”



“As host country, Jamaica is honoured to facilitate the work of ISA in ensuring the sustainable development of our resources and the management of the deep seabed. As Member States, we highly appreciate ISA’s work and contributions towards attaining the SDGs, which really speak to life below water, particularly SDG 14. We want to express our warmest congratulations to ISA on this 25th anniversary, and we wish the Authority all the very best for the next 25 years as we work together for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”



Senator the Hon.  
**Kamina Johnson Smith**

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica  
President of ISA Assembly 25th Session (2019)

## THE BEGINNING

On 16 November 1994 the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) entered into force, establishing ISA as the trustee of the mineral resources of the deep seabed which are designated as the common heritage of all mankind.



Signing of the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority on 26 March 1998.



# TIMELINE

The first session of ISA takes place in Kingston, Jamaica on 16 November 1994 in the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.



The Assembly adopts the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of ISA on 26 March 1998.

The Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area are adopted by the Council and approved by the Assembly on 13 July 2000.



15-year exploration contracts are signed with the former registered pioneer investors, marking the end of the pioneer regime under resolution II of UNCLOS III.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany on 19 July 2006.



The Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Sulphides in the Area are adopted on 7 May 2010.

The Council adopts a decision requesting the Seabed Disputes Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to provide an advisory opinion.

1994

1996

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

2006

2008

2010

- The Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS of 10 December 1982 enters into force on 28 July 1996.
- Mr. Satya N. Nandan (Fiji) elected first Secretary-General of ISA. The Assembly elects the first Council of ISA and the Finance Committee.
- The Council adopts its Rules of Procedure and elects the first Legal and Technical Commission (LTC).

The Assembly approves the Headquarters Agreement between ISA and the Government of Jamaica on 25 August 1999.

Exploration contracts for polymetallic nodules are signed with: Yuzhmorgeologiya and Interoceanmetal Joint Organization (IOM) (29 March 2001), Government of the Republic of Korea (27 April 2001), China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) (22 May 2001), Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd. and Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (IFREMER) (20 June 2001).

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with the Government of India on 25 March 2002.

Mr. Nii Allotey Odunton (Ghana) is elected as the second Secretary-General of ISA.



# TIMELINE

On 1 February 2011, the Seabed Disputes Chamber issues its Advisory Opinion in Case No. 17 on the Responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to activities in the Area.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. on 22 July 2011.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with Global Sea Mineral Resources NV (GSR) on 14 January 2013.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with UK Seabed Resources Ltd. on 8 February 2013.

Contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed with Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC) on 27 January 2014.



Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd. on 19 January 2015.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte Ltd. (OMS) on 22 January 2015.

Contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation on 10 March 2015.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with UK Seabed Resources on 29 March 2016.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with Cook Islands Investment Corporation on 15 July 2016.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with the Government of India on 26 September 2016.



The Assembly adopts the first ever Strategic Plan for ISA, covering the period 2019–2023.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with the Government of the Republic of Poland on 12 February 2018.

Contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed with the Government of the Republic of Korea on 27 March 2018.

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

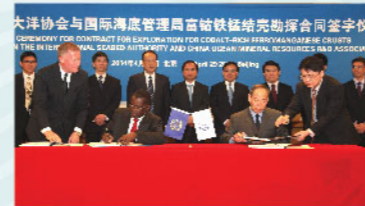
2018

Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with COMRA, China on 18 November 2011.



The Regulations on prospecting and exploration for Cobalt-rich Ferromanganese Crusts in the Area are adopted on 27 July 2012.

Contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed with COMRA on 29 April 2014.



Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with Government of the Republic of Korea on 24 June 2014.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with IFREMER, France, on 18 November 2014.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of the Federal Republic of Germany (BGR) on 6 May 2015.

Contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed with Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais S.A., Brazil, on 9 November 2015.



Mr. Michael W. Lodge (United Kingdom) elected as the third Secretary-General of ISA.

Contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules signed with China Minmetals Corporation on 12 May 2017.



Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep Sea Research launched on 23 July 2018.



# ISA TODAY

Today, ISA is comprised of 168 Members, including the European Union.

ISA is fully committed to serve the needs of its Member States by promoting effective ocean governance to protect the marine environment, conserve its biodiversity, advance marine scientific research and sustainably develop its resources for the benefit of humankind.

ISA has evolved in line with the evolutionary approach outlined in UNCLOS into the organization that it is today. As of today, ISA has approved 30 contracts for exploration in the international deep seabed area, involving 22 different countries, covering 0.7 % of the world's seabed. Thirteen of these contracts have been signed or sponsored by developing countries, including four Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

ISA is currently developing exploitation regulations for deep-sea marine minerals known as the Mining code. The Mining code when completed, will provide a holistic regulatory framework for the exploitation of the resources in the Area, thus, reinforcing the provisions of UNCLOS especially with respect to the effective protection of the marine environment, conservation of marine biodiversity and equitable sharing of benefits for all mankind .

The regulations are anchored in the driving principle that the proceeds of any mining of the deep seabed will be transparent, and for the benefit of humankind today and tomorrow. This presents a unique opportunity for ISA to work together with its partners to advance the 2030 Agenda and ensure a sustainable future for all.





Through fostering strategic partnerships, including with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through:

- the promotion of the rule of law;
- the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels;
- responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels;
- broadened and strengthened participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

Through its contribution to increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacity and the transfer of marine technology and the advancement of a common and uniform approach, consistent with the Convention and international law, to the sustainable use of ocean resources.

Through the development of specific research programmes designed to improve the assessment of essential ecological functions of the deep sea oceans through long-term underwater oceanographic observatories in the Area.

Through the encouragement of sustainable production practices.

Through its contribution to improving the technological capabilities of developing countries.



Through the distribution of payments received by ISA in accordance with equitable sharing criteria.

Through the promotion of the transfer of skills and knowledge via training programmes and scholarships to least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, including landlocked developing countries.

Encouragement of gender equality through dedicated efforts to increase opportunities for qualified women from developing States to participate in marine scientific research programmes.

Through its contribution to:

- sustainable economic growth and the promotion of access for least developed countries to the Area and its resources
- the protection of labour rights for those engaged in activities in the Area in conjunction with the International Labour Organization.

# CONTRIBUTION OF ISA TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE UN SDGs

ISA is committed to contributing to the timely and effective implementation of the SDGs, in particular SDG14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. ISA does this by implementing the economic, environmental and social mandates assigned to it under UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement. These mandates include:

- 1 Ensuring that activities in the Area are carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole;
- 2 Ensuring effective protection for the marine environment; and of human life;
- 3 Promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area, and the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area.

## REGULATION OF DEEP-SEA MINERAL RESOURCES

Under UNCLOS, the mineral resources of the deep seabed are designated as the common heritage of all mankind.

UNCLOS established ISA as the organization responsible for managing this vast area of ocean space and ensuring that its resources are used for the benefit of all humanity.

One of ISA's critical achievements is the adoption of regulations governing prospecting and exploration for marine minerals. Currently, Members of ISA are considering mining

regulations that would allow commercial-scale recovery of seabed minerals.

This Mining Code is being developed through a transparent process involving several rounds of consultations with Member States, the scientific community, academia, the private sector and civil society. Once adopted, this would be the first time in history that global rules, based on the highest level of prudence and precaution, are approved before an industry starts.

## PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY

Environmental protection is at the forefront of ISA's responsibilities. ISA decides how and where deep seabed mining will take place, under what conditions, how environmental impacts will be minimized, and which areas will be protected.

Since 2012, ISA has established nine areas of particular environmental interest on the seabed of the Pacific Ocean as part of the regional environmental management plan adopted for the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (CCZ). Collectively, these areas cover 1.6 million square kilometers.

These areas represent one of the largest applications of marine protected areas on earth. ISA is also in the process of

extending regional environmental management plans for the North Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and the North West Pacific.

One of ISA's current priorities is to ensure that all the data and information collected by deep-sea mineral exploration contracts over several decades of work is centralized in the DeepData database for the benefit of all mankind.

The research undertaken as part of ISA's exploration contracts is the main source of data and knowledge helping us to better understand the deep seabed environment and ecosystems. It is also through this research, that we will be able to identify the best measures required to protect the marine environment.

# MARINE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

## DeepData

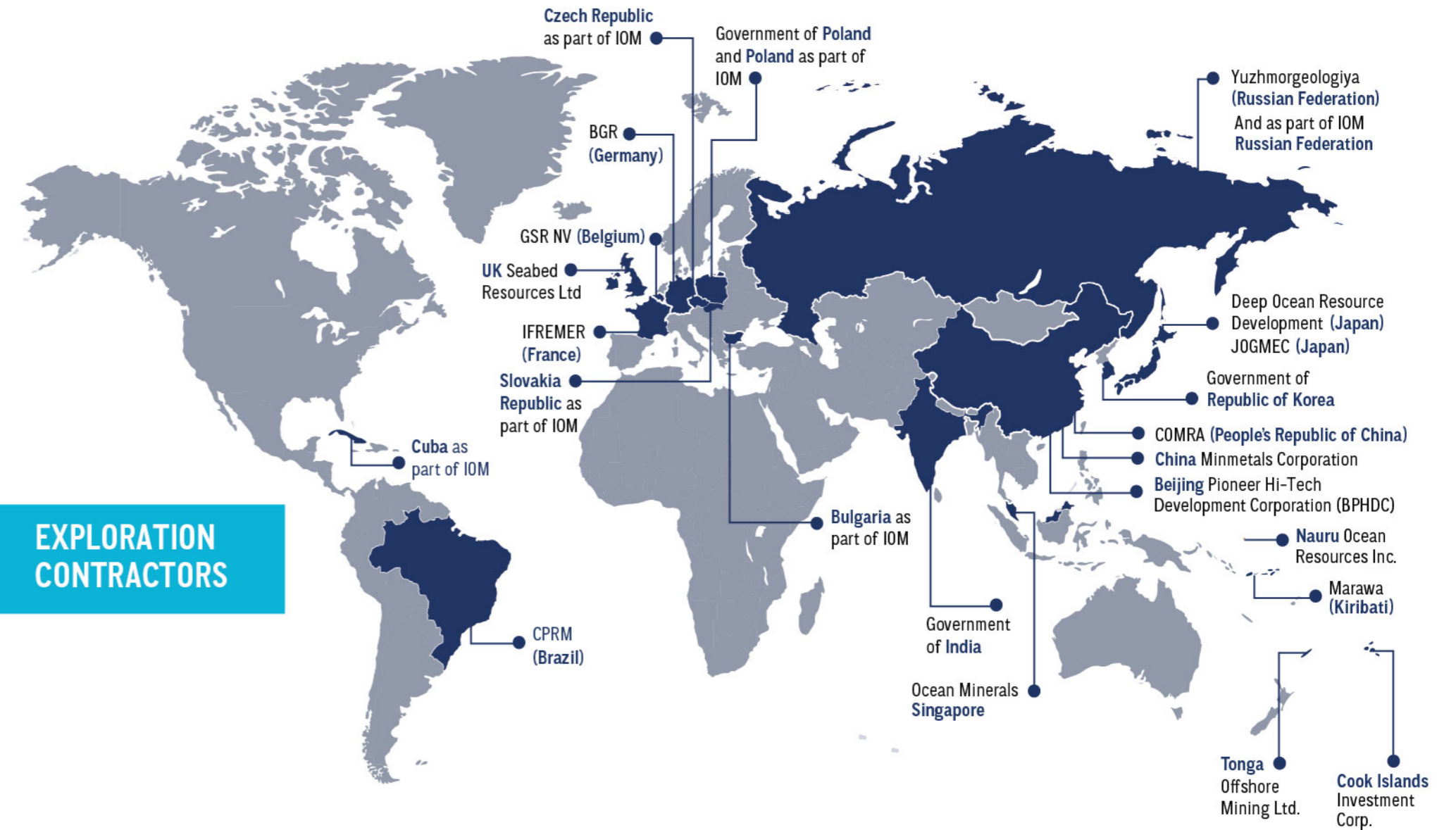
Promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and coordinating and disseminating the results of such research is at the core of ISA's mission.

In 2019, ISA launched the DeepData database, which will serve as the principal repository of all deep seabed related data collected in the Area. Currently, the database contains biological, physical and geochemical parameters of the marine ecosystems from the seafloor to the ocean surface, submitted by ISA's contractors. DeepData also contains maps, photographs, videos, graphics and relevant publications published in peer-review journals received from contractors.

The Geographical Information System is also part of DeepData's functionalities, and allows visualization of contract areas, reserved areas and designated areas of particular environmental interest.

As the principal repository of data and information relating to activities in the Area, DeepData is a critical tool to support ISA in organizing and controlling the activities in the Area; ensuring the effective regulation of prospecting, exploration and exploitation of deep seabed mineral resources; effectively protecting the marine environment; and equitably sharing benefits derived from the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area.

## EXPLORATION CONTRACTORS



# UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 2017, the UN General Assembly declared the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development for 2021-2030 to foster scientific research and technological innovation in support of a healthier, more sustainable ocean. This initiative is led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO).

The objectives of the Ocean Decade are at the core of ISA's mandate, which is 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.

Recognizing these synergies, IOC-UNESCO and ISA have joined forces to achieve shared objectives, such as improved mapping of the seabed and enhancing ocean observing networks. By building inclusive, innovative and transformative partnerships, IOC-UNESCO and ISA are meeting their strategic objectives and those of the UN Decade - to universally foster action to advance ocean science for the benefit of all mankind as a whole.



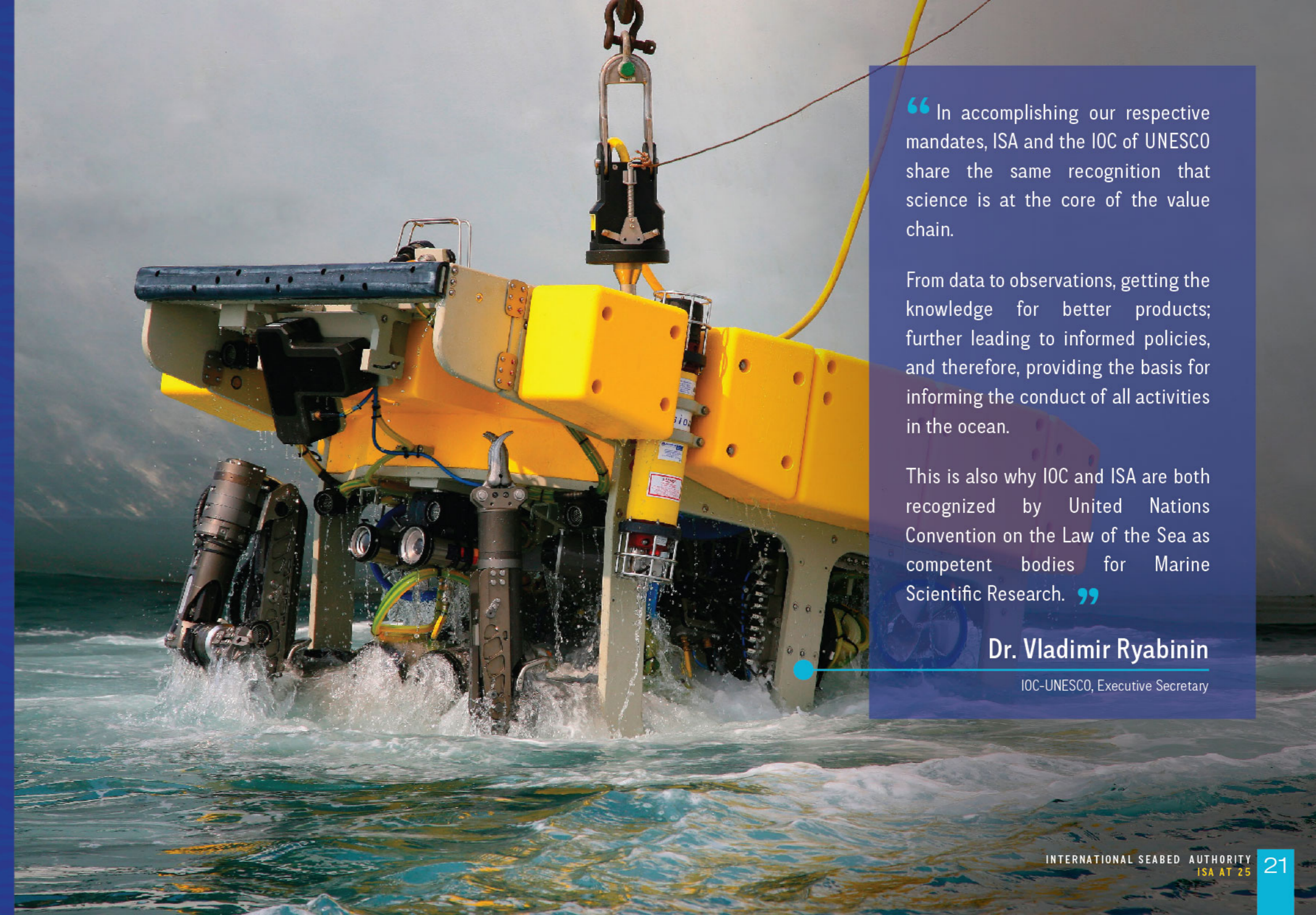
United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intergovernmental  
Oceanographic  
Commission



2021  
2030 United Nations Decade  
of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development



“ In accomplishing our respective mandates, ISA and the IOC of UNESCO share the same recognition that science is at the core of the value chain.

From data to observations, getting the knowledge for better products; further leading to informed policies, and therefore, providing the basis for informing the conduct of all activities in the ocean.

This is also why IOC and ISA are both recognized by United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as competent bodies for Marine Scientific Research. ”

**Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin**

IOC-UNESCO, Executive Secretary

# INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

There are three main ways in which ISA seeks to carry out its responsibilities under articles 143 and 144 of UNCLOS, to promote marine scientific research in the Area and to encourage capacity building of developing States in deep-sea research and technology.

## ISA Contractor Training Programme

Under UNCLOS, ISA contractors have a legal obligation to provide and fund practical, hands-on programmes for trainees from developing States and the personnel of ISA in all activities in the Area which are covered by the contract. Over the last six years, 134 placements have been provided as part of the training programme, including: at-sea training, Master and PhD programmes, dredging seminars, taxonomy workshops, engineering courses, legal fellowships and internships. In the next five years, it is anticipated that up to 200 additional training placements will be made available.

## Endowment fund for marine scientific research in the Area

The Fund aims to promote and encourage the conduct of MSR in the Area for the benefit of humankind by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries and offering them opportunities to participate in training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. Over the last decade, 145 individuals have benefitted from marine scientific research related training initiatives in the Area.

## ISA Internship Programme

The ISA internship programme provides a framework through which students and young government officials from diverse academic backgrounds can gain exposure to the work and functions of ISA, while ISA benefits from their skills. Over the last 6 years, 29 interns have benefitted from the programme.

## ISA TRAINEES by region 2009-2019





## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR OCEAN SUSTAINABILITY

ISA continuously collaborates with key stakeholders from governments, the private sector, international and regional organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

As of today, ISA is comprised of 168 Members and 92 observers including 30 observer States, 32 intergovernmental organizations and 30 NGOs.

Mindful of the fact that partnerships are essential to act collectively towards the achievement of the Goals and targets of Agenda 2030 particularly in connection with SDG14,

ISA is determined to ensure that such partnerships are not only effective and inclusive but also specifically conceived and designed for actions over the long-term.

This will be critical to increase participation of developing States, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and SIDs in all decision-making processes as well as in operational activities particularly in marine science programmes.

Innovative partnerships are also required to ensure better implementation of international law, in particular UNCLOS.

# A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Today, the international deep seabed is at the frontier for cutting-edge marine science and deep-sea exploration.

The rich mineral deposits found on the sea floor and the biodiversity associated with them create exciting challenges and opportunities. The prospects offered by this new frontier are enormous as the research undertaken should enable us to better understand our planet and further develop a sustainable future.

Thanks to the efforts of its Member States, ISA has grown and matured in accordance with the evolutionary approach envisaged in UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement. As a result, ISA is today at a critical point of its evolution with the full potential of its mandate yet to be fully realized and fully understood.

The greatest challenge for ISA going forward is to decide how to implement its obligation to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits as required by UNCLOS. This includes monetary and non-monetary benefits such as capacity building and access to scientific knowledge.

More than ever international cooperation to advance marine scientific research in the deep seabed is required and will be key to the sustainable development of our oceans. We are all dependent on the ocean for survival. Together, we must build the capacity of Member States, civil society and the private sector to address knowledge gaps and enable action at all levels to deliver, together, the ocean we need for the future we want.

“ By building on the achievements of the past 25 years we can use our unique global mandate to move forward collectively in a way that meets the demands of the 2030 Agenda and together, we have the opportunity to shape the implementation of international law for the next 30 to 50 years. ”

**Michael W. Lodge**

Secretary-General, ISA









Made up of 167 Member States, and the European Union, ISA is mandated under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to organize, regulate and control all mineral-related activities in the international seabed area for the benefit of mankind as a whole. In so doing, ISA has the duty to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed related activities.