

Opening remarks ISA Council

Secretary-General, 25 February 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I wish to welcome all members and observers to the first part of the twenty-fifth session of the ISA Council. It is truly encouraging to see such a large and active participation by member States as well as observers from all parts of the deep sea mining community. Your engagement is essential as we continue the essential work of shaping the detailed rules for commercial deep sea mining in line with the targets and road map agreed on by this Council in 2017 and in 2018.

Since the last time we met in July 2018 much more work has been done towards achieving our goal. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all those member States, contractors, industry groups, scientific institutions, environmental NGOs and private individuals who contributed written comments on the draft regulatory code. The comments provided were comprehensive, thoughtful and insightful. The secretariat has done its best to analyze these comments and reflect them back to you in the detailed working papers that have been prepared for this meeting. I hope you find these useful and a solid basis for the Council to give clear policy guidance to the Legal and Technical Commission on these issues, so that the Commission is in a position to carry out its work effectively and present draft regulations to the Council for negotiation in July.

You will also find on the website an advance version of the comparative study of national legislation that was requested by the Assembly in the context of the Article 154 review. This study will be published in due course, but in the meantime we welcome feedback and comments from member States on the advance draft.

In line with the budget and work programme adopted by the Assembly in 2018, the secretariat has been strengthened with the addition of a communications unit and an environmental management team that will be dedicated to the delivery of a dedicated work stream for the development of regional environmental management plans.

We are also in the process of rolling out the new ISA database which will provide an unprecedented level of transparency and insight into the important environmental data collected by pioneer investors and contractors over the past several decades of deep sea research, consisting of some 120 individual research cruises and 6,000 days at sea in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone alone, making this one of the most studied areas of deep sea floor on the planet.

Sadly, as we prepare to launch the database, we have to say goodbye to one of its founding architects. Dr Sandor Mulsow, who dedicated the last two years to the establishment of the database, has retired from the secretariat. I wish to express my appreciation to Dr Mulsow for his service to the organization and wish him well for the next stage of his career. I also wish to welcome his successor as Director of the Office of Environmental Monitoring and Marine Minerals, Jihyun Lee, who joins us from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Jihyun is also our first Korean national in the secretariat and our first woman in a senior management role.

Also, in relation to the secretariat, I hope delegates enjoy the new accreditation and lounge space on the first floor of the secretariat building as we continue to try to improve the experience for delegates attending meetings in Jamaica. I wish to express my great appreciation to the host government of Jamaica for facilitating the expansion of our facilities and for providing additional space within the building for the Authority.

This increased activity and intensity of work does not occur in a vacuum. Even as we sit here, exploration work is taking place in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone and contractors are preparing for new cruises that will increase our collective knowledge of the deep sea. Trainees are out at sea and others are travelling at this moment to join research ships in foreign ports. At the same time, as you will be aware, the Legal and Technical Commission will next week be considering a new application for a plan of work for exploration, including the proposed designation of another reserved area for future use by the Enterprise or developing States.

Thanks to the efforts of you and your predecessors here in this Council room, the most innovative legal regime ever designed by humankind for the equitable and sustainable use of natural resources is rapidly becoming a reality.

Our urgent task now is to take this regime on to the next level, to prepare the groundwork that will set the conditions for the first applications for plans of work for exploitation and allow those whose exploration contracts were extended in 2016 to understand what they must do to proceed to the next

stage, as the Council expects them to do in good faith. I recall that this is one of the reasons why the Council adopted a target of 2020 for adoption of the regulations.

Judging by the breadth and depth of the comments received on the draft regulations, as well as the intense but highly engaged and informative discussions that took place in the informal working group on financial terms last week, I believe this is a goal that is shared by all members of the Council.

I welcome you all to Jamaica and wish you a productive week of discussions.