

**AFRICAN GROUP STATEMENT
ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED
AUTHORITY IN KINGSTON, JAMAICA, 25TH JULY, 2019**

**Madam President, Kamina Johnson-Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs
and Foreign Trade of Jamaica,**

**The Most Honourable Andrew Michael Holness, Prime Minister of
Jamaica,**

His Excellency, Mr. Baron Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru,

**H.E. Mr. Michael Lodge, Secretary-General of the International Seabed
Authority,**

**Her Excellency, Lumka Yengeni, High Commissioner of South Africa to
Jamaica and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South
Africa to the ISA, and President of the 25th Council of the Authority,**

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this anniversary message on behalf of the 47 Member States of the African Group.

The African Group congratulates all Members of the Authority on such an auspicious occasion of the 25th Anniversary of this august body. We thank the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority and the Secretariat for putting together such an elaborate programme to celebrate the occasion.

Madam President,

The African Group wishes to take this opportunity to express our profound appreciation to the Government and People of Jamaica, for hosting us for the past 25 years and for the warm hospitality they have always extended to us over the years in ensuring that we are always comfortable during our meetings. I dare say that the hospitality of Jamaicans is genetic, as it has its roots from Africa, due to the historical connections that exist between Jamaica and the continent. On the 14th and 15th June, 2019, His Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo led a high-level bilateral visit to this beautiful country and Prime Minister Holness acknowledged the

historical connections in his remarks that the relationship between our two countries are deeply rooted in our ancestral and historic connections, as many Jamaicans trace their roots to the Akan region in Ghana.

Madam President,

We cannot mark the 25th Anniversary of this important Institution, which has, as its fundamental principle, safeguarding the Common Heritage of Mankind, without recognizing the invaluable contributions of pioneers of this august body. The African Group, therefore, wishes to take this opportunity to commend Mr. Satya Nandan, the first Secretary-General of the Authority for all that he put in building and modeling the Authority to what it is today. Africa is also proud to be associated with the second Secretary-General of the Authority, Nii Allotey-Odunton, an illustrious son of the continent, who equally continued with the good works of his predecessor. It would be recalled that the two gentlemen devoted substantial parts of their working lives in the service of the Authority and humanity on the principle of the common heritage of mankind until their retirement. The Group would like all to give them a standing ovation for their invaluable services.

Madam President,

The African Group is appreciative of the fact that work is ongoing after the exit of the two past Secretary-Generals of the Authority. On that score, we wish to also commend His Excellency Mr. Michael Lodge, for the excellent manner he has continued to steer the affairs of the Authority so far. He has continued to carry the torch handed over to him by his predecessors with dedication and the Group appreciates his efforts. The African Group, therefore, pledges its support to the Secretary-General to succeed in his efforts to find solutions to the issues on the Common Heritage of Mankind.

Madam President,

The commitment of Africa towards the protection and preservation of the Ocean and its surroundings, which includes the highseas, cannot be overstated. As a show of commitment, during the 22nd Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly, the African Heads of States declared the decade of 2015-2025 as the Decade of African Seas and Oceans and marked 25th

July as African Day of Seas and Oceans, which coincides with our memorable celebrations today.

Madam President,

In recognizing the specific purpose for the setting up of the Authority, we must take cognizance of the fact that the Law of the Sea Convention does not only guarantee the right of all States, rich or poor, to access the mineral resources of the deep seabed, but also assures equality of access to developing States, including the land-locked and geographically disadvantaged States, and small island developing States. This fact must underpin our celebration of this anniversary. In marking the occasion, we need to take stock of our past experiences and challenges to chart a way forward for the Authority. We have come a long way and the African Group is particularly appreciative of all the efforts put in by the past Secretary-Generals, members of the Legal and Technical Commission, both past and present in the development of various documents to guide our quest to explore and exploit minerals in the deepsea. We have the 5-year strategic plan in the offing, the draft mining code and the financial model being deliberated upon by members of the Authority. As a group, we have made

our concerns known in various interventions over the years and are of the view that these concerns will form integral parts of the outcome documents based on consensus.

Madam President,

We wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our continued call on the Authority to continue with their unflinching efforts in building the capacity of developing states in deep-sea research and technology through its contractor training programmes and the Endowment Fund for marine scientific research in the Area. We further encourage the continued capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General and other Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations, which, we believe, can objectively assist developing states to sustainably manage their ocean-based activities and resources, including through the implementation of the Convention and other related agreements as well as participate in the activities of deepsea mining, where we lack capacity. We also welcome IMO initiative of prioritizing technical assistance programmes that focus on human resources development and institutional capacity-building with a view of a successful agenda 2030.

Madam President,

I wish to recall that during the 23rd session of the Authority, calls were made by Algeria on behalf of the African Group and supported by other members of the Authority for the setting up of a museum in honour of Nii Allotey Odunton, the immediate past Secretary-General of this august Institution. At the 24th session, Ghana's delegation indicated that the Government of Ghana was seized with the matter and that a decision was going to be taken in respect of Ghana's commitment to the establishment of the said museum. I, therefore, have the honour to inform members that the Government of Ghana has made a donation of twenty-five thousand United States dollars (**US \$ 25,000.00**) towards the establishment of the museum. We wish to thank the Government of Jamaica for providing the space and giving technical support for the works that have been carried out. The African Group will like to commend His Excellency Mr. Lodge for his relentless efforts in the establishment of the museum, a dream come true.

In closing, I wish to congratulate the Secretary General and his staff on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Authority and to encourage member states to continue to support the Authority in its activities for effective management and protection of the Area.

Madam President,

Finally, the African Group would, once again, like to congratulate all for being part of this occasion.

Toutes nos félicitations (French), Felicidades (Spanish) , Tahanina (Arabic), Pongezi (Swahili) and Ayekoo (Twi-Ghana),

I thank you.