



Statement by: The Most Hon. Andrew Holness, ON, MP
Prime Minister of Jamaica
at the
25th Anniversary Commemorative Session of
the International Seabed Authority
Kingston, Jamaica
25th July 2019

Salutations:

- Madam President,
- Your Excellency – President of Nauru
- Mr Secretary General
- Ministers of Government
- Other Heads of Delegation
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen all

Jamaica was honoured to host the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in Montego Bay in December 1982. We are even more honoured to be the seat of the International Seabed Authority which was established in 1994 when the Montego Bay Convention entered into force, and to host the Secretariat, which two (2) years later took over the UN premises and facilities..

Over these 25 years, the Government and people of Jamaica have maintained a deep sense of privilege to be the seat of the Authority and the only developing country to host an autonomous international organisation that may, in the not too distant future, achieve universal membership.

The presence of Heads of State and Government, Ministers, former ISA Secretaries General, United Nations and other officials from near and far, is testament to the importance the international community attaches to this 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Montego Bay Convention and the establishment of the Authority.

This milestone provides an opportunity to celebrate the Authority's achievements and to reaffirm the central role it is mandated to play in the area beyond national jurisdiction.

Let us give due recognition to the crafters of the Montego Bay Convention, the "Constitution for the Oceans", some of whom are here today. We are indebted to these men and women for the foresight and tenacity that they brought to what has been described as one of the 'longest and hardest negotiations'.

I also acknowledge the sterling contributions of our ISA representatives over the years and am pleased that our current Permanent Representative, Dr. Kathy-Ann Brown is a candidate for election to the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea. Her longstanding dedication and experience position her well to meaningfully contribute to the work of that important Tribunal.

This progressive organization, entrusted with the management and preservation of the common heritage of humankind, is to be congratulated for effectively undertaking the orderly, safe and responsible administration and development of the resources of the deep seabed.

The ISA's promotion of knowledge and research in the Area, providing significant scientific and technological insight into the value of the seas and oceans and their resources to the existence and welfare of our peoples, is worthy of commendation.

Additionally, its facilitation of capacity building for developing countries has been particularly helpful for Small Island Developing States, whose limited resources generally preclude their full participation in and benefit from the achievements of the Authority.

We welcome the spotlight on SDG 14 to '*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*'. Recognizing the importance of the seas and oceans to our economic sustainability, Jamaica continues to actively engage in the ISA and other international forums where these matters are addressed.

The UN Climate Summit to be held in September is one such critical platform where Jamaica has been given a mandate by the

UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, to advocate for developed countries to deliver on their commitments.

Another very special initiative is my participation in the '*High Level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy*' at the invitation of Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg. This forum promotes increased awareness of the value of a sustainable ocean economy and fosters scientific and technical exchanges for blue growth.

With our long history of involvement in maritime affairs, Jamaica remains committed to the development of rules and standards in international shipping, as well as the promotion of maritime development, particularly in the Caribbean region. We are therefore, seeking re-election to the Council of the International Maritime Organization for the period 2020-2021.

Noting the ongoing rapid deterioration of the global marine environment, I call on all Member States to use the opportunity of the Authority's 25th anniversary to recommit to the preservation and equitable utilization of marine resources and to ocean-based climate action.

A healthy ocean is vital for effectively addressing the impacts of climate change and sustaining the lives and livelihoods of our peoples. Urgent action is required therefore, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in keeping with the Paris Agreement.

It is imperative therefore, that we also recommit to accelerated and ambitious actions to mobilize and unlock climate financing. This will require focused attention in the remaining weeks, as we

approach the UN Climate Summit, as well as the COP25 in December, dubbed the “Blue COP”.

Looking ahead to the next 25 years, Member States must prepare for responsible mining of the resources of the Area. While exploitation promises socio-economic benefits, this must proceed on the basis of appropriate regulations, standards and guidelines that ensure the effective protection of the marine environment. The Authority must also increase its visibility and the public’s understanding of the importance of its work to humanity.

Jamaica recently signed an agreement as a sponsoring State for an application for exploration in the Area and we are moving forward with the development of legislation that will ensure compliance with all relevant international rules and best environmental practices. We are encouraged with the work that is being undertaken on the Enterprise. The operationalization of the Enterprise will present developing countries with much needed opportunities for participation in deep seabed mining.

The Government and people of Jamaica are pleased to host the delegates at this special commemorative session. Notwithstanding a tight work schedule, we encourage you to experience some of the cultural offerings of our beautiful island home.

Madam President,

In closing, I reiterate warmest congratulations to the ISA on this milestone anniversary. Jamaica pledges its continued unwavering commitment and extend every good wish for your success in the years ahead.