



Statement by

Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

JAMAICA

**to the Twenty-third Session of the
International Seabed Authority (ISA) on the Report of the
Secretary-General**

Kingston, Jamaica

16th August 2017

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

It is my particular pleasure to extend hearty congratulations to you on your assumption of the Presidency of this Assembly. We envision a satisfactory and productive Twenty-third Session under your leadership. Jamaica is honoured to have been elected by the members of this august body to serve as one of its Vice-Presidents and we congratulate all other member countries who have been similarly elected.

I also commend your predecessor, Rear Admiral Khurshed Alam of Bangladesh, for his able stewardship of the last session.

On behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, I extend a very warm welcome all delegations to our shores. To those visiting for the first time, it is our pleasure to host you, and it is hoped that you will use the opportunity to explore and enjoy the many attractions of Kingston, a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

My delegation is quite humbled by the many expressions of congratulation from Member States, on the occasion of the fifty-fifth anniversary of our Independence and we thank all of you for your kind sentiments towards our Government and people.

Jamaica endorses the statement made by the head of the delegation of Brazil, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries.

Mr. President,

New Members

Jamaica is particularly pleased to welcome Azerbaijan and Ghana as the most recent States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The accession of these states represents a further vote of confidence in the work of the Authority which ensures continued relevance of the Convention in a changing world. We strongly encourage those states that have not yet ratified the Convention or accede to Part XI to do, thus ensuring the universality of the constitution of the ocean.

Mr. President,

Secretary General's Report

I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the Authority. I also commend him for the energy and enterprise he has demonstrated since assuming office in January 2017. This augurs well for your leadership of the International Seabed Authority.

We note the efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat to undertake effective administrative oversight and coordination of the many aspects of the Authority's work, with the addition of technical and scientific staff, while simultaneously streamlining the management structure. We consider this critical to ensuring that the Authority can effectively fulfill its mandate.

Jamaica further takes note of the Secretariat's participation in the common system of the United Nations, which allows for cost-saving measures and the streamlining of operations in key areas such as human resources, procurement, information technology, travel and sharing common premises.

In these challenging times the pursuit of cost-savings and efficiency measures, is to be commended as the optimal use of scarce resources is a priority for all Member States. In so doing, we should be mindful however, that the Authority's effectiveness should not be compromised.

In that regard, Jamaica is well-advanced in facilitating that objective with the establishment of the UN House at the Block 11 Building, which is currently home to the ISA. We gratefully acknowledge the important support that the Secretary-General has given to this project.

Mr. President,

Financial contributions

Undoubtedly, the Authority cannot effectively perform its mandates without the requisite financial resources, and indeed its viability could be threatened. We are particularly concerned about the state of the Voluntary Trust Fund, which could be exhausted by 2018. This presents a clear danger to the representation of developing countries in the Legal and Technical Commission and as well as in the Finance Committee. Should this become a reality, we are all agreed that the work of these organs will not only become compromised, but null and void.

Adequate financing of the Authority also impacts its ability to undertake capacity-building in member states, through workshops and internships, of which SIDS, such as Jamaica, are the primary beneficiaries.

We note from the Secretary General's Report that several countries, including some in our region, are in arrears with their annual contributions, for periods in excess of two years. We urge such States Parties therefore, to fulfill their obligations to the Authority, as soon as possible. We also commend those countries that have made voluntary contributions to the Trust and Endowment Funds, and strongly encourage other Member States to do likewise. Other proposals for the replenishment of the Trust Fund are to be considered and pursued.

Mr. President,

Exploration and Exploitation

We look forward to continued progress by the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) in the seven priority deliverables for the development of the exploitation regulations over the next twelve to eighteen (12 - 18) months. We recommend that States Parties give serious consideration to these priorities, even as we work towards refining the areas identified.

Within that framework, the adoption of appropriate rules, regulations and procedures for the protection and conservation of the natural resources of the Area are imperatives, pursuant to Article 145(b) of the Convention.

The work with which we are charged as an Assembly acting as the stewards of the interests of both present and future generation, requires that we consider and assume responsibility for the possible implications of deep seabed mining on our environment. Both UNCLOS and the Mining Code recognise that seabed mining may cause environmental damage. Any determination of acceptable

levels of environmental impact, taking into account the possible cumulative and long-term impacts, must be informed by the views of all stakeholders, as the Authority is charged with acting on behalf of all humankind. An open discussion on the issue with a view to the establishment of a standard of acceptable harm is an essential element of an environmental management strategy.

We are concerned about the many identified and perceived shortcomings in fulfilling our mandate with respect to the environment. Discussion Paper (No.5) on “***The Implementation of the Precautionary Approach by the International Seabed Authority***” highlights many of these and provides a list of recommendations that we should examine, both here in the Assembly, as well as in the Council. We must not overlook the important role we play as a plenary in considering all problems of a general nature in connection with activities in the area.

Mr. President

Governance through adaptive management – an important matter addressed in a submission by Netherlands (ISBA/23/C/5) - requires the continual adjustment of environmental standards and management measures as new information comes to light.

The possibility of using market-based instruments to incentivize contractors to deliver environmental objectives and targets is one measure that has been proposed. We embrace the suggestion that what is required is not only a five-year strategic plan for the work of the Authority, as proposed in the

recommendations stemming from the Article 154 Review, but also a strategic plan for the environmental management of seabed mining.

It was nearly 50 years ago, that the First Committee of the UN General Assembly began consideration of Agenda Item 92: “***Examination of the question of the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the seabed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind***”. We strongly support the development of environment management plans that promote the conservation and protection of our common heritage.

Jamaica is fully committed to engaging in the process of shaping the international instrument on the protection of biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction, as well as the mining regulations in all organs of the Authority, with a view to delivering on the objectives with which we have been charged by UNCLOS. In this, we are guided by the vision and ambitions of all peoples.

Mr. President,

The Report of the Article 154 Review

Jamaica is pleased with the progress made regarding the review of Article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We are

committed to a continuous process of reform that will enhance the integrity and efficiency of the Authority.

We will make a further contribution on this particular matter, when the item comes up for consideration.

Mr. President,

The Library and Information Systems

It is heartening to see the progress made in enhancing the research capability of the Satya N. Nandan Library. We note with gratitude the assistance this facility has provided to many Jamaican institutions. In this regard, we commend the local and international partners who have extended support over the years. We are conscious that such generosity is a vital component of an investment in a body of knowledge that will no doubt redound to the benefit of all of humankind.

It is in this context that the upgrades resulting from the development and modernization programme is most welcomed.

Jamaica's Candidature to the International Maritime Organization

Before closing, I wish to remind partners in this forum, in which we consider matters relating to our maritime space, of Jamaica's candidature for membership of the Council of the International Maritime Organization in Category C. The elections will take place this November at the seat of the

Organization in London, and I ask that you convey to your respective Governments our desire for your support.

Jamaica's relationship with the IMO is a long and mutually beneficial one. The very coastline on which we are now located, hosts a series of activities which are central to the developmental aspirations of our island, by way of the varied activities undertaken in our maritime industry. The Kingston Harbour is in full sight and close by is the Port Authority of Jamaica and the Kingston Container Terminal. The Maritime Authority of Jamaica is literally next door to you and across the harbor lies the Caribbean Maritime University. These stand in the privileged company of this International Seabed Authority. Jamaica is heavily invested in the further development of these and other elements of our maritime industry and in the supportive international environment which is created by the International Maritime Organization for the conduct of our activities in this regard.

Mr. President,

We reaffirm our continued support for the important work of the International Seabed Authority, as well as our commitment to being great hosts.

Finally, I convey my very best wishes for a successful conclusion of this Twenty-third Session of the Authority.

I thank you.