

**Statement of the delegation of Lebanon at the 23rd session
of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority delivered**

By Marwan Francis

Kingston, Jamaica August 15th, 2017

Mr. President,

I would like to first congratulate you on your election as president of the assembly of the 23rd session of the International Seabed Authority, I also wish to congratulate the Vice-Presidents for their election. We assure you of our support and cooperation towards the successful conclusion, under your leadership, of the proceedings of this session.

I would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive and detailed Annual Report on the activities undertaken by the Authority during the past year.

Mr. President,

Lebanon's intimate relationship with the oceans and seas goes back to ancient times, when our forefathers from Berytus, Byblos, Sidon and Tyre roamed the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, and beyond, with their vessels and ships, trading and interacting with other cultures and peoples, building new cities and ports on its shores. The Sea is ingrained in our country's history, culture and national character. It is our conviction that through our contribution to the conservation and preservation of our oceans and seas, we are also protecting our past, present and future.

While it is imperative that governments should lead on the national level to implement relevant policies to preserve oceans and seas, those efforts can only bear fruit by the participation of all other relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, the academic community, and UN agencies. Successful implementation will also require bolstering international cooperation to provide the necessary technical assistance, technology transfer and capacity building to developing countries, including middle income countries, like mine.

Renewed, and increased, interest in Lebanon with the seas and seabed exploration and mining came in 2010, when the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) reported that the Levant Basin, in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, holds unexplored potential reserves of up to 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas.

The Offshore Petroleum Resources Law (OPRL) relating to petroleum activities within Lebanese territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was passed in 2010. To ensure that negative environmental impacts are controlled and minimized, the Government of Lebanon had carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in 2012 in compliance with the requirements of the OPRL. The SEA report evaluated the likely environmental and social effects

of oil and gas activities in Lebanon. The SEA report extended its focus to the potential results of the licensing programs, including exploration and production, drilling, processing and transportation. The report will help in making informed decisions to strike a balance between promoting economic development and effective environmental and community protection. In the future, individual contractors acquiring exploration and production rights will also be contractually committed, to providing Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) before carrying any activities.

Mr. President,

Lebanon attaches great importance to the development of a sound maritime order, based on the law of the sea, with United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) at its core, as well as to the role played by the Authority, as the organization through which States parties to the Convention administer the resources of the Area, by approving and issuing contracts to qualified entities wishing to explore or exploit deep-sea mineral resources.

Lebanon supports the conduct of marine research in the international seabed area for the benefit of humankind. In this regard, we encourage further contributions by donor countries to the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research. Lebanon reiterates the provisions of article 144 of UNCLOS relating to the transfer of technology. We call upon the authority to increase its efforts in promoting and encouraging the transfer of technologies to developing countries, in areas of deep-sea research. My delegation wishes to thank the contractors providing training programmes as part of their contracts for exploration in the Area for qualified scientists and technical personnel.

Lebanon, like other developing middle income countries, welcomes contributions to the voluntary fund in order to insure participation of experts from developing countries in the meetings of the Finance Committee and the Legal and Technical Commission, which also contributes to further transparency.

Lebanon supports the continued efforts of the secretariat to streamline expenditures and commends its continued efforts to implement cost saving measures in its regular budget. Lebanon welcomes the establishment, in January 2017, of the Contract Management Unit, which will act as the focal point for the submission of reports by contractors to better manage the internal workflow for the review of annual reports.

Lebanon also welcomes the Government of Jamaica's commitment to bringing all UN agencies in Jamaica together under one roof at the Authority's headquarters.

Finally, Mr. President,

My delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to our host country Jamaica for their warm hospitality, we also wish them a happy 55th independence day.

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