



International Workshop on Capacity development, resources and needs assesment

Kingston, Jamaica

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OPENING REMARKS

by Mr. Michael W. Lodge,
Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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It is a great pleasure and a privilege to welcome you all to Kingston for our first ever international workshop on capacity development, resources and needs assessment.

This workshop, which I must say is long overdue, is one of our flagship initiatives for 2020 in the context of the Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan for the Authority.

Regrettably, a few colleagues have been delayed or are unable to participate as a result of the current global challenges that exist for travel at this time, but I am very pleased therefore that so many of you have been able to attend.

I particularly wish to welcome the UN High Representative for small island States, least developed countries and land-locked development countries, Fekita 'Utoikamanu, who is making her first visit to Jamaica.

I also wish to extend a special welcome to Her Excellency Mathu Joyini, currently head of the Diplomatic Training and Support unit of DIRCO, South Africa, but in a former posting the High Commissioner of South Africa to Jamaica as well as the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the Authority. Ambassador Joyini was also instrumental in making the hosting arrangements for the ISA workshops in Pretoria last year and it is a great pleasure to welcome her back to these shores as an old friend of Jamaica and the Authority.

The context for this workshop is based firmly around the mandate of the Authority as set out in the Law of the Sea Convention and the 1994 Implementation Agreement, and the need to implement that mandate through the Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2023.

The fundamental principle at the heart of the legal regime for the Area under the Convention is that all activities in the Area must be carried out for the benefit of all humanity.

Right from the outset, it was recognized that this objective cannot be met unless developing States have the capacity to realize those benefits. That is why the Convention recognizes, for example, the need for States Parties to promote international cooperation in marine scientific research in the Area and to develop programmes through the Authority for the benefit of developing States and technologically less developed States.

That is also why the Convention requires the Authority to take measures to acquire technology and scientific knowledge relating to activities in the Area and promote and encourage the transfer to developing States of such technology and scientific knowledge so that all States Parties benefit therefrom. Under the 1994 Agreement, this is to be achieved particularly by developing training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes in marine science and technology and the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Historically, the main vehicle for delivery of these objectives has been the contractor training programme, which was originally introduced as a mandatory component of the plans of work for exploration for registered pioneer investors under the resolution II regime. This programme, as it has evolved, has been tremendously successful, and I would like to pause to congratulate and recognize the commitment of all our contractors to invest in training and maximize the benefits of this programme. We will hear more about this in Session II, when we will review the outcomes of an in-depth assessment of this programme.

At this point, let me also thank all of those, member States, contractors and current and former trainees, who responded to the surveys to help us carry out an evaluation of the contractor training programme, and also recognize the role played by our consultant, Dr Rahul Sharma, who compiled this part of the report.

But this is not enough by itself. The ISA Strategic Plan for 2019-20234 explicitly recognizes the duty of the Authority to ensure that a variety of capacity-building mechanisms are needed. Such mechanisms should not only aim at facilitating the transfer of technology to developing States but also, ensuring the expansion of opportunities for participation in activities in the Area.

To implement these aspirations, the High-Level Action Plan adopted by the Assembly in August 2019 requires several specific actions to be undertaken by the Secretariat by 2020. One specific action is to “assist developing States, in particular geographically disadvantaged States, small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, in identifying their needs”.

And it is primarily to deliver against this item that we are convening this workshop.

The expected outputs of the workshop, as set out in the background document, include to:

- Map the critical capacity development needs of developing States members of the Authority.
- Identify the resources available to address those needs and potential options for increased extra-budgetary support.
- Develop recommendations for the consideration of the Assembly.

- Develop a list of priority capacity-development activities for the Authority.

In order to get to that point, the background documentation and the sessions of the workshop have been carefully organized to enable the workshop as a group to:

- Clarify the nature and objectives of capacity-building and technical assistance provided by the Authority in the context of Part XI of UNCLOS.
- Undertake an assessment of capacity-building needs compared to the current capacity-building initiatives and programmes implemented by the Authority in order to understand how to improve their effectiveness and impact.
- Identify the core elements for the design and development of a dedicated strategy for capacity-building activities that will measurably contribute to increase capacities of member States.

I am sure that you will find that the resources we have provided for you in terms of background documentation will enable us to achieve these objectives. This has been the product of many months of hard work and planning and again I want to thank all those who responded to surveys, as well as the team of staff and consultants in the secretariat that have done all the preparations for this workshop. I particularly wish to acknowledge the efforts of Marie Bourrel-McKinnon, Tearinaki Tanielu, Ryan Barbar, Chapi Mwangi and Kayon Wray.

To conclude, let me just make a few general remarks about the place of capacity development within the context of the Authority as we go forward.

We are all aware that the Authority is entering a new phase of its existence. After 25 years we are coming close to the adoption of a Mining Code that will allow commercial exploitation of seabed minerals to begin in the way envisaged by the Convention. We are also making important advances in protecting the marine environment through the development of regional scale environmental management plans.

To a great extent the progress that has been made in terms of deep-sea research and technology development are the product of parallel advances in marine science technology that have taken place over the past decades, as well as in related fields, such as data management. We see this in other sectors too, such as the ongoing discussions at the United Nations in relation to marine genetic resources, as well as the preparations for the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

Tomorrow's deep-sea operations will rely just as much on artificial intelligence, big data, DNA, nanoscience and innovative sampling techniques as they do on tried and tested traditional offshore technology.

So, while there is no doubt that the spirit of the provisions contained in the Convention remain just as valid today as they were 25 years ago, it is equally clear that we need to reconsider the ways in which we can deliver capacity development to ensure that they meet the real needs not just of today but also of tomorrow's scientists.

I wish you well in your deliberations and I look forward to the outcomes of the workshop.
