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Statement

By

H.E. Michael Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

On behalf of the International Seabed Authority I am delighted to be in Monaco at this very important meeting. I am equally delighted as this is my first participation in this plenary body during my tenure as Secretary-General of the Authority, which began on 1 January of this year.

Mr. Chairman,

14 July of last year marked an important and historical date for both the International Seabed Authority and the International Hydrographic Organization. On that day, nine months ago, the Authority and IHO concluded an Agreement of Cooperation the main purpose of which is to consult each other on matters of common interest with a view to ensuring maximum coordination of both organizations' work and activities.

In light of that, it seems convenient that I provide you with a brief background to the Authority's work and activities, particularly those that may be of interest to IHO so as to promote the identification of potential areas of consultation and cooperation between the two organizations.

The Authority is 23 years old this year, having been established in 1994. However, its history goes back almost 50 years to the beginning of the discussions that led to the negotiation of a comprehensive United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It was the dream of many countries at that time that there should be an international agreement to ensure that the mineral wealth of the deep seabed beyond the outermost limits of the continental shelf would

not be appropriated by a few technologically advanced countries, but would be shared between all countries, including the landlocked and disadvantaged countries.

The end result of these negotiations was Part XI of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which establishes the Authority as the international organization through which States Parties

are to organize and control activities in the international seabed area, also known as the Area. All States Parties to the Law of the Sea Convention are automatically members of the Authority, which means that as of 2017 the Authority has 168 members. Part XI gives the Authority a very specific and limited mandate. Nonetheless, while the Authority's mandate is primarily focused on managing mineral resources and regulating the exploration and exploitation phases of deep seabed mining, its mandate also covers matters relating to the promotion of marine scientific research in the Areas.

In relation to that matter, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, the rest of my intervention will concentrate on three points:

First, current exploration activities in the Area.

Exploration for deep seabed minerals has been taking place for many years, Even before the Convention was adopted, consortia from the United States and several other developed economies, had been conducting extensive exploration campaigns for polymetallic nodules deposits. Since the entry into force of the Convention, deep seabed exploration may take place only under contract to the Authority, in accordance with strict conditions, including requirements to collect geological, oceanographic and environmental data.

As of today the Authority has approved 28 contracts for exploration covering more than 1.3 million square kilometres of the seabed. Contractors include States, state entities and private corporations sponsored both by developed and developing States.

Exploration work is taking place simultaneously in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans. By far the area of most intense activity remains the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone in the Central Pacific Ocean where 14 contractors are exploring for polymetallic nodules.

These efforts represent more than 30 years of intense scientific research on the deep seabed. In fact, the acquired non-proprietary data and information provided by contractors, including detailed bathymetry, are of potential interest for the work of the IHO and relevant for the cooperation Agreement between the two organizations. The Agreement emphasizes the importance of collecting and exchanging standardized data and information, which may include the bathymetric survey data collected by contractors. At the same time, IHO can help the ISA and our contractors by establishing procedures and standardized protocols for survey equipment and metadata characterization, as well as access to its global databases.

This brings me to my second point.

The role of the Authority in promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the Area.

According to the Convention, marine scientific research in the international seabed area shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole. The Authority's mandate is to promote and encourage this research and to help ensure that the results are coordinated and disseminated for the benefit of all, particularly the developing countries.

The various activities of the Authority concerning marine scientific research are currently centered on the organization of workshops on different topics ranging from technical issues related to the minerals of the deep seabed to environmental matters. Additionally, the Authority promotes at-sea research and training through seminars and postgraduate courses for scientists from developing countries.

Such a role creates excellent opportunities for collaboration and partnership-building. This is the more so, when there is in place a legal structure which facilitates inter-agency cooperation, like the ISA-IHO Cooperation Agreement. This takes me to my third and last point.

Third, opportunities for enhancing cooperation between the Authority and IHO.

An important feature of the consultation and cooperation aspects under the ISA-IHO Cooperation Agreement relates to the situation when either organization proposes to initiate a programme or activity on a subject in which the other has a substantial interest, consultation will be initiated between the two, with a view to harmonizing their efforts as much as possible

In light of that, good opportunities may arise to put the Cooperation Agreement into practice in the context of the proposed IOC and IHO, GEBCO global program entitled "Seabed 2030 - Roadmap for Future Ocean Floor Mapping", with the goal of compiling a high-resolution map of the seabed from the coast to the deepest trenches by the year 2030. As I already mentioned, the non-proprietary and non-confidential data collected by the Authority and its contractors could be of potential value to the project, whilst improved seafloor mapping is indispensable to mineral prospecting and exploration, as well as environmental management. The Authority is ready to consult, cooperate and exchange information in this regard.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman.

I am firmly convinced that the mandate, experience and field of current work of activities of the two organizations are of common interest. The ISA-IHO Cooperation Agreement provides splendid and optimal opportunities to enhance mutual consultation, cross-sectoral cooperation, communication and exchange of information. The proposed IHO/IOC/GEBCO project is just one illustration how the Authority could contribute and join efforts in partnership so as to enhance ocean management and deep ocean science for the benefit of mankind.

Thank you.