



**72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
Agenda Item 77(a) Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

United Nations Headquarters, New York City

**5 December 2017**

STATEMENT BY H.E. MICHAEL W. LODGE  
SECRETARY-GENERAL  
INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

.....

In 1970, the General Assembly had the foresight to set aside the seabed and ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction as the common heritage of mankind. Since 1994, when the Convention entered into force, this Area has been managed through the Authority for the benefit of mankind as whole so as to promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples of the world.

I am pleased to see that the draft of the Oceans and the Law of the Sea Resolution reaffirms the important work of the Authority under the framework of the Convention.

During 2017, the first year of my tenure as Secretary-General, I have devoted great efforts to improving the internal management and performance of the Secretariat, as well as enhancing the ways in which the Authority communicates to Member States and other stakeholders. The Authority has also tried throughout the year to participate in major conferences held at the United Nations, including the meetings of the Preparatory Committee established under resolution 69/292 related to marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, and the UN Ocean Conference held in June. I am grateful to States Parties for the support they have shown for the work of the Authority and their interest in its work.

The comprehensive legal regime set out in Part XI of the Convention provides an ideal platform for the Authority to make important contributions towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. To that end, the Authority has registered seven voluntary

commitments, with a special emphasis on supporting SIDS, LLDCs and African States to build capacity, promoting marine scientific research in the Area, and encouraging gender-based approaches to deep ocean sciences.

As one of the core aspects of the Authority's mandate is to promote, encourage and coordinate marine scientific research in the Area, I am pleased to see that Section XI of the draft resolution calls for the support of the Authority's Endowment Fund for marine research in the Area. That Fund has contributed to training of 83 scientists from 43 different developing countries, including consistent support for the Rhodes Academy over the past six years.

Moreover, in view of the critical importance of marine science in the framework of the Convention, the Authority has lent its full support to the IOC initiative relating to the proclamation of a United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021. The Authority, as a committed participant in UN-Oceans, will collaborate with IOC and others in ensuring successful deliverables from the Decade.

I will make brief comments on some of the salient aspects reflected in the draft Resolution, particularly those concerning the Area and the effective functioning of the Authority.

As recognized in OP64 of the draft resolution, a priority for the Authority is to adopt regulations for exploitation of marine mineral resources in the Area. This is critical because the Council has granted extensions to the exploration contracts held by the former pioneer investors on the basis that they will be in a position to proceed to exploitation. This will not be possible without exploitation regulations that are commercially viable and, at the same time, set the highest standards for protection of the marine environment. I encourage States Parties to provide comments on the draft regulations by 20 December, according to the road map agreed by the Council, as your full participation is critical to the success of the process. Furthermore, it is my intention to organize a series of open briefings for the regional groups here in the U.N. Headquarters in January 2018 with a view to facilitating more inclusive discussions in the Council next year.

An equally high priority, highlighted in OP71 of the draft Resolution, is for the Authority to make rapid progress on developing regional environmental management plans, especially in regions where there is active mineral exploration. The Secretariat is reaching out to potential partners to help facilitate a series of scientific and technical workshops in 2018 focusing on

key mineral provinces of interest for exploration.

Third. The draft resolution welcomes the recent periodic review of the Authority pursuant to Article 154 of the Convention and references the Assembly's request to see a draft strategic plan for the organization in 2018. I intend to consult on this matter in the coming months and it is my hope that States Parties take ownership of the plan by articulating a long-term vision for the Authority.

Fourth. The draft resolution rightly notes serious concerns around low attendance at annual sessions of the Assembly. To address that problem, I am grateful that States Parties had endorsed a revised schedule of meetings for 2018 and 2019, to include two meetings of the Council in each year. The revised schedule also recognizes the pre-eminence of the Assembly as the supreme organ of the Authority, and I encourage all States Parties to attend and participate in that meeting. I am pleased to announce that the new voluntary trust fund to defray the costs of participation of members of the Council from developing States is now established, and I encourage contributions to be made to this Fund by States Parties and others.

Fifth. It is imperative for the effective functioning of the Authority that States Parties pay their assessed contributions on time and in full. Despite some encouraging recent developments, with the payment in full by some member States who were considerably in arrears, I regret that 41 States remain in arrears and will face the suspension of their voting rights by virtue of article 184 of the Convention. I urge States Parties to renew their efforts to pay arrears of contributions, as the present situation impacts both on the effective delivery of work by the Authority and on the ability to exercise membership rights.

Sixth. In light of the Authority's fundamental role in collecting and sharing data and information on the deep seabed, I welcome the references in OP70 and OP284 to the value of the cooperation between the Authority and other relevant organizations under the umbrella of the GEBCO Seabed 2030 project.

Seventh. I am particularly grateful for the reference in OP81 to the need for coastal States to deposit with the Secretary-General of the Authority a copy of the charts or lists of geographical coordinates showing the outer limits lines of the continental shelf as provided for in Article 84(2) of the Convention. This is an essential part of the process of defining the boundary between national jurisdiction and the Area and assuring certainty in the

administration of the Convention. As of today, only seven States Parties have fulfilled their obligation in this respect.

And finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Jamaica for their consistent support for the Authority and their commitment to fulfilling their obligations as host country.