



**Agenda Item 79(a)  
OCEANS AND LAW OF THE SEA**

70th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT  
BY  
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SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

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Mr. President,

This being the first time that the International Seabed Authority is addressing the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, please allow me to express to you our warmest congratulations on your election to the Presidency and to assure you of the Authority's trust and support.

Mr. President, Excellences and distinguished delegates,

I wish to refer to the two resolutions before the General Assembly and convey my appreciation to member States for their references to the importance of the work of the International Seabed Authority. I also wish to express my thanks and gratitude for the very detailed reports of the Secretary-General which, this year once again, provide comprehensive background information for our review and to the dedicated Director and Staff of DOALOS for the excellent cooperation with the Secretariat of the Authority throughout the course of the year.

Mr. President,

As comprehensively reflected in the draft resolution contained in document A/70/L.22, this year marked a critical point in the evolution of the Authority on a number of matters. These matters, to name a few, included the decision of the Council on substantive actions to be undertaken and a time frame to complete the Exploitation Regulations for polymetallic nodules in the Area (12 to 18 months), the decision on procedures and criteria for the extension of contracts for exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area, the unprecedented decision to undertake a review of the way in which the legal regime for the Area has operated in accordance with Article 154 of the Convention, the number of contracts signed by the Authority and identification of resources to facilitate their administration, and the increase in capacity-building opportunities provided and funded by Contractors, as well as the continuing efforts at capacity-building made possible by the Authority's Endowment Fund.

The Authority has been entrusted with the implementation of the "common heritage of mankind" which applies to mineral resources beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The legal regime for the common heritage of mankind represents a major innovation not only in the law of the sea but also in international law in general. The regime turns into life, a revolutionary vision towards the sustainable development of mineral resources in the international seabed area and the sharing of benefits and responsibilities for all States, including the land-locked and geographically disadvantaged States.

Mr. President,

In paragraph 54 of the draft resolution, the Assembly has noted that 27 plans of work for exploration for the three mineral resources presently identified by the Authority have been approved by the Council of the Authority. This represents a remarkable increase in number and demonstrates the trust placed by Contractors and their sponsoring States in the administration of the common heritage of mankind by the Authority. This year, the Authority signed five new contracts bringing the total number of contracts for exploration to 23. Two of the new contracts were for exploration for polymetallic nodules with Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd on 19 January 2015 and with Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte Ltd on 22 January 2015; one contract was for exploration for polymetallic sulphides with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural resources of Germany on 6 May 2015, and the last two contracts were for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation on 10 March 2015 and the second with Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais of Brazil on 9 November 2015. At the present time therefore, fourteen of the contracts are for exploration for polymetallic nodules, five are for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and four are for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts.

It is anticipated that the remaining approved plans of work will be converted into contracts and signed prior to the twenty-second session of the Authority in July 2016.

On behalf of the Authority, I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to these entities and their sponsoring States whose actions indicate their strong commitment to the concept of the common heritage of mankind, their confidence in the work of the Authority and who have thus entered into a long-lasting cooperative relationship with the Authority.

Mr. President,

While new contracts have entered into force this year, six of the first contracts signed by the Authority in 2001, for exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area will expire in 2016. As a result, it was urgent for the Authority to adopt procedures and criteria for the extension of contracts, in the absence of any applications for contracts for exploitation. The Legal and Technical Commission which was requested to undertake this task was able to recommend a set of procedures and criteria to the Council which adopted them in July 2015. The procedures and criteria for the extensions recognized the efforts of Contractors during the last fifteen years, and will ensure that the Commission is provided with all the necessary information and data in order to make appropriate recommendations on the requests for extensions. I wish to express my appreciation to the expeditious manner by which the Council was able to proceed and adopt procedures and criteria by consensus.

As of today, five requests for extensions of contracts for exploration for polymetallic nodules have been submitted to the Authority. These are from Yuzhmorgeologiya sponsored by the Russian Federation, the Interoceanmetal Joint Organization sponsored by Bulgaria, Cuba, Czech Republic, Poland, the Russian Federation and Slovakia, the Government of the Republic of Korea, the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association sponsored by China and Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd sponsored by Japan. Consideration of these requests will be placed on the agenda of the Legal and Technical Commission for its next meeting that will commence on 22 February 2016.

Mr. President,

The draft resolution before the Assembly recognizes the ongoing work of the Authority on the exploitation code for polymetallic nodules as a matter of priority and in accordance with the list of priority deliverables endorsed by the Council of the Authority in July 2015. This major issue will be granted all the support that is needed by the Secretariat including external experts to enable the Commission and the Council to perform their responsibilities next year.

Mr. President,

Paragraph 53 of the draft resolution reiterates the importance of the pioneering and ongoing efforts of the Authority to develop a standardized taxonomy and nomenclature for the fauna associated with polymetallic nodules, pursuant to the responsibilities entrusted to the Authority in relation to the protection of the marine environment and marine scientific research in the Area. In that regard, I am pleased to refer to the third workshop dealing with standardization of the taxonomy of meiofauna associated with polymetallic nodules which will be convened next week in Ghent, Belgium. I wish to express my gratitude to the Belgian University for hosting this workshop. Representatives of all Contractors for polymetallic nodules as well as expert taxonomists will participate. This will provide outcomes that will be placed on the agenda of the Legal and Technical Commission next year to ensure that the recommendations for the guidance of Contractors are complete with regard to the fauna associated with polymetallic nodules (megafauna, macro fauna and meiofauna) and that standardization keeps abreast of the latest scientific methods. After review by the Commission, it is expected that the standardized taxonomy will be made available to all Contractors and marine researching institutions on the Authority's webpage.

Of equal importance as well are the Recommendations issued by the Commission in July 2015 to provide reporting standards for exploration results and resource classification. This mineral resource classification framework is particularly necessary in the light of the increasing commercial interest in the resources of the Area and in the assessment of activities of Contractors. At the workshop convened for this purpose in 2014, it was indicated by the experts present that resources identified in

exploration areas could be classified in a number of ways including speculative, inferred, measured and reserves of the metals that they contain. These classifications describe the extent to which, inter alia, resources have been sampled, the distances between sample stations, the availability of technology to mine them and markets for the metals of commercial interest. Of the various classes, reserves are the class of resources of most interest to investors and bankers. While it was recognized that Contractors had achieved a lot in their efforts to identify reserves of copper, nickel and cobalt in their exploration areas, it was also recognized that no contractor had yet undertaken a pilot mining test to prove that nodules could be brought up to the ocean surface in quantities that could support a viable mining project.

The Recommendations issued by the Legal and Technical Commission include factors that have to be taken into account, the data and information required and the need for pilot mining tests to ground truth models that have been developed to ascertain the potential profitability of a deep seabed polymetallic nodule project. The last time any such tests were conducted was in 1978. Since then, a number of the associated technologies have been radically improved, such as flexible risers. Another component of the mining system that would have to be tested is the collector device in situ. At current costs, it would appear that very few Contractors would wish to undertake this test individually. I believe that such tests could be facilitated by collaboration among Contractors to test their collector devices, conduct pilot mining tests and conduct environmental impact assessments. This approach will reduce costs and risks to each contractor and facilitate the conversion of polymetallic nodule resources from inferred resources to reserves of the metals of interest which is a prerequisite before proceeding to exploitation. The Authority will take the necessary steps to support such collaboration.

Mr. President,

Paragraphs 58 and 60 of the draft resolution emphasize the importance of the role entrusted to the Authority by articles 143 and 145 of the Convention and refer to the need for environmental management plans for regions and areas where there are currently exploration contracts. In this regard, member States have shown a clear commitment to build upon the ongoing work done by the Authority in connection with the implementation of the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone which will be reviewed next year. I am pleased to inform the Assembly in this regard that discussions are already underway to convene a workshop on a review of the implementation of the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone as well as on lessons learnt that could be applied in a plan for the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and other geographic areas, taking into account data availability and standardization, and in cooperation with other sponsoring governments and organizations.

Mr President,

At the twentieth session of the Authority, the Assembly adopted a budget of \$15,743,143 for the Authority's operations for the financial period 2015-2016. During that session, the Council also adopted a decision that an overhead charge would be paid by Contractors to enable the Authority to perform the function of administering their contracts. This was in the amount of US\$47,000.00 per annum. Support was voiced for the idea of establishing an International Seabed Authority Museum. The Secretary-General was requested to prepare a report for consideration by the Council outlining the objectives of establishing such a museum and how they would be achieved.

Mr. President,

Echoing paragraph 61 of the draft resolution, I wish to convey the Authority's appreciation to those that have made contributions to the Authority's Endowment Fund and its Voluntary Trust Fund. The Authority's Endowment Fund promotes and encourages the conduct of collaborative marine scientific research in the international seabed area for the benefit of humankind through two main activities:

By supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes and activities, and

By providing opportunities to these scientists to participate in relevant initiatives.

As of 1 December 2015, a total of 76 scientists and government officials from 40 countries have obtained financial support from the ISA Endowment Fund. The recipients were from Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Egypt, Fiji, Greece, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia, Namibia, Nigeria, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Viet Nam. The Voluntary Trust Fund is to help developing States members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee to participate in their meetings.

Mr. President,

The draft resolution before the Assembly attaches great importance to capacity-building. In this regard, I wish to refer to the approximately 90 training opportunities that would arise as a result of contracts for exploration that have been issued since 2011. That number could reach 130 as a result of the remaining contracts for exploration to be concluded in 2016. The number does not include the training opportunities that would arise from the extension of contracts for exploration in 2016 and 2017. I take this opportunity to call upon Member States to assist the Authority in disseminating information on available training opportunities so that no training opportunity is lost and capacity-building needs match with opportunities.

Mr. President,

As recognized in paragraph 69 of the draft resolution, the Authority has attached great importance to raise awareness of its work by organizing sensitization seminars. I wish to express my gratitude and thanks to the Governments of South Africa and Chile for having hosted the tenth and eleventh seminar this year. It is expected that in 2016, a sensitization seminar will be convened in Accra, Ghana.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the Authority is getting closer and closer to the realization of the unique regime of the common heritage of mankind. At this critical juncture, it is essential for all members of the Authority to attend meetings and contribute to the realization of the common heritage of mankind which concerns not only the present but also future generations. The legacy will depend on the contributions of all members of the Authority. At the next session, the Authority will elect half of the members of the Council for the period 2017 to 2020, a Secretary-General, members of the Legal and Technical Commission and members of the Finance Committee, and will adopt the budget for the period 2017-2018. I therefore encourage the widest possible participation by all members in the twenty-second session of the Authority in July 2016.

Mr President, Excellences and distinguished delegates I wish all of you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

I thank you.