



HARARE BLUE TALKS
Access to Maritime Benefits for Land-locked States

**Accessing Oceans and Their Resources by Implementing
International Law as Reflected In
The United Nations Convention on The Law of The Sea**

Kingston, Jamaica

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STATEMENT

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

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Excellencies,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greetings from Jamaica,

I wish to thank the governments of Portugal and Kenya as well as the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Zimbabwe for inviting the International Seabed Authority to be part of this event.

The Authority is the organization through which States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities in the international seabed, otherwise known as the Area, for the benefit of humankind.

It is therefore a great pleasure to be with you today to discuss the relevance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and particularly the work of the Authority, to landlocked developing countries.

I propose to use the next few minutes to talk about the challenges as well as the opportunities for landlocked developing countries to benefit from the promises of the blue economy.

The interests of all humanity in the ocean and the conservation and sustainable use of its resources, make it imperative that the global governance regime reflects the maritime interests of all States, whether coastal or landlocked.

As we celebrate this year the fortieth anniversary of UNCLOS, it is important to recall that the rights granted to landlocked countries under UNCLOS are fundamental to achieving the outcomes of the Vienna Programme of Action and ensuring that all can benefit from the blue economy. Those rights, including the freedom of transit through the territory of other States in order to exercise their right of access to and from the sea, have been designed specifically to overcome obstacles caused by geography.

UNCLOS defines “Landlocked States” as “States which have no sea-coast” (Art. 124(1)(a)). Thirty-two out of the 43 landlocked States are developing countries. Seventeen of these landlocked countries are also considered least developed countries, including 13 in Africa.

Although landlocked developing countries make up 10 per cent of the member of the Authority, only 20 of the 32 landlocked developing countries have so far become parties to UNCLOS and members of the Authority. In Southern Africa, these include Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe

As far as the Authority is concerned, the rights of developing landlocked States are explicit. They have the right to participate in deep sea mineral exploration and marine scientific research as well as to share the financial and economic benefits from deep-sea minerals. The system provides for preferential access to potential mine sites for developing countries through the reserved area system and grants priority in the equitable distribution of financial benefits from deep seabed mining.

Further, LLDCs, like all other States, enjoy the high seas freedoms of navigation and overflight and of laying submarine cables and pipelines, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms (UNCLOS, Art. 58(1)).

In 2021, the Authority issued a series of three publications for landlocked developing countries, least developed countries and SIDS respectively, to increase awareness among policy and decision makers of the specific provisions and rights recognized in UNCLOS for these three groups of countries.

In accordance with its mandate under UNCLOS, the Authority aims to support LLDCs’ participation in the blue economy mainly through the design and implementation of mechanisms for building and developing capacity, in line with the priority needs identified by them.

It is in this context that the Authority has been implementing its programmatic approach to capacity development to ensure that all programmes and initiatives implemented are meaningful, tangible, efficient, effective and targeted at the needs of developing States, including LLDCs.

Soon, we will come together at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon on the theme “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”, co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal. This will be an opportunity to propel science-based innovative solutions aimed at starting a new chapter of global ocean action in the face of some of the most defining issues of our time, including economic inequality.

For the Authority, the Lisbon Conference will be the opportunity to review and discuss our joint efforts to foster regional and international cooperation in support of a sustainable blue economy for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. One of our five side events at the Conference will be an event specifically on this issue co-sponsored by Bangladesh, Botswana and the Cook Islands. If you are in Lisbon, please come and join us.

Almost 1.000 individuals, including approximately 300 women have benefited from capacity building programmes and initiatives implemented through the Authority. This gives me an opportunity to say a few words about the importance of women’s empowerment, which has become a priority in our work.

Significant efforts are being made towards enhancing the role and participation of women from developing States in deep-sea research, including through tailored capacity-building and capacity development activities. Most prominently, the Women in Deep Sea Research (WIDSR) Project is designed to address the challenge of under representation of women from developing States, and in particular from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in ocean science and deep-sea research.

Later this month, the WIDSR Project will release an important report on “Empowering Women from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in Deep-Sea Research”. The report provides a detailed gender mapping of deep-sea research and related disciplines, including careers in different sectors and identifies the critical barriers faced by women from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in participating and accessing leadership roles in fields relating to marine scientific research. I was delighted to see that Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi actively contributed to this report. Based on the research results, we plan to roll out a global mentoring programme for women deep-sea researchers with a specific focus on women from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

What emerges from the application of UNCLOS is a vision of a more just and equitable international economic order which takes into account the interests and needs of humankind as a whole and reflects the interests and needs of developing countries, whether coastal or landlocked.

The regime for the deep seabed, implemented through the Authority, lies at the heart of the entire system of global ocean governance under UNCLOS. Without the Authority, we could easily have seen rampant unrestrained exploitation of the deep seabed and appropriation of its resources for the benefit of only a few.

We could also have seen the exclusion of landlocked developing countries from the economic benefits a sustainable blue economy can offer.

In fact, what we have seen is the progressive development of a sophisticated and balanced legal regime, open to equal participation by developed and developing States, whether coastal or landlocked States, anchored in the precautionary approach, transparency, and equity, and fully aligned with Agenda 2030.

This makes me hopeful for the next 40 years of UNCLOS. I urge you to participate fully in the regime and take advantage of its unique provisions designed specifically to benefit landlocked developing countries.

Thank you
