



**International Gender Champions
Launch of the Impact Group “Research and Oceans for Women”**

Geneva, Switzerland

7 June 2022

STATEMENT

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

.....
Greetings from Jamaica

It is really my great pleasure to welcome you to this launch meeting of the International Gender Champions Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women.

Joining the International Gender Champions network in March 2020 was one of the best decisions I have made since becoming Secretary-General of ISA. I am proud to support the objectives of the network and to do what I can to help break down gender barriers and make gender equality a reality.

This year, I made two pledges to the IGC network:

- To advance women’s empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research by introducing programmes aimed at addressing the specific challenges faced by women scientists from developing States including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island States.
- To make further progress towards gender parity in the Secretariat, including at the most senior levels.

Good progress has been made on both pledges. Women’s empowerment and leadership is defined as a priority of ISA’s programmatic mandate, as reflected in the significant efforts 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.

Later this month, under our WIDSR Project, implemented jointly by the International Seabed Authority and the UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, we will release a major 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.

At the organizational level, thanks to the emphasis placed on reaching gender parity among ISA staff, 60 per cent of secretariat staff are women as of June 2022.

The aims of this new Impact Group, which I invite you all to join, is threefold:

- 1) Ensuring strategic visibility of gender issues in the field of ocean affairs (advocacy and outreach)
- 2) Promoting and facilitating targeted capacity-building initiatives and programmes to support increased women participation in ocean affairs (organizational as well as programmatic)
- 3) Advancing women empowerment and leadership in marine scientific research and international law (including through the Women in Deep-Sea Research project)

I am honoured to be joined in this initiative by the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tonga, Fekita Utoikamanu, and the UN Legal Counsel, Mr Miguel de Serpa Soares.

The need for this Impact Group is obvious.

SDG 14 of the 2030 Agenda calls for conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Hardly surprising when it is estimated that ocean-based industries produce contribute around €1.3 trillion to global gross income.

To ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability of ocean-based industries, it is essential that marine scientific research and ocean governance are promoted and supported.

The rule of law is also at the core of the ability of the international community to “ensure a legal order for the seas and oceans which will facilitate communication, and will promote the peaceful uses of the seas and oceans, the equitable and efficient utilization of their resources, the conservation of their living resources, and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Yet in all this, women are still severely under-represented in many areas of ocean affairs, including in highly technical and emerging fields of ocean science and engineering.

This reflects a historical gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. However, unless systematic change is introduced to reduce the gender gap, traditional ocean-based sectors such as fisheries, maritime transport as well as emerging and future ocean-based sectors such as offshore renewables and marine minerals will continue to suffer from lack of gender parity.

It is, therefore, urgent and necessary that collective efforts be engaged to ensure that women are provided with the opportunity to fully participate in all aspect of ocean related issues including through increased efforts to support women empowerment and leadership in all fields of ocean governance and ocean science.

It is my hope that creating this Impact Group, and you all joining hands with us, can catalyze efforts to change the situation.
