



“Our Common Agenda”

Thematic consultation 4

Protecting our planet and being prepared for the future

New York City, New York

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STATEMENT

by

Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to contribute to this thematic consultation on behalf of the International Seabed Authority and to respond to the Secretary-General’s invitation to contribute ideas on how to address the challenges identified under Our Common Agenda.

I wish to suggest that when we consider how to reinforce our collective action to respond to these challenges, the success of the legal regime for the international seabed Area offers a concrete example of some of the mechanisms that could be replicated in future to ensure sound and careful management of global public goods.

In fact, the deep seabed, covering 54% of the global ocean, is the only example that we have of a global commons that has been set aside to be managed internationally for the common good. Today, this space is the frontier for cutting-edge marine science, technological innovation, and deep-sea exploration.

The prospects offered by this new frontier, which is the common heritage of all humanity, are enormous. The research being undertaken will enable us to better understand our planet and further develop a sustainable future. The rich mineral deposits found on the sea floor and the biodiversity associated with them also create exciting opportunities for sustainable development.

In this context, the Authority represents a unique experiment in civilization. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea established the Authority as the organization responsible for managing this vast area of ocean space.

The regime for the deep seabed lies at the heart of the entire system of global ocean governance under the Convention. It could easily have failed. However, today, this comprehensive governance system has the full and active support of 168 States parties, as well as the participation of 94 observers.

Without the Authority, we could easily have seen rampant unrestrained exploitation of the deep seabed. Instead, we have the benefit of 40 years of carefully managed deep-sea exploration which has massively expanded our collective understanding and knowledge of the ocean at large. This systematic approach to scientific knowledge is essential if we are to effectively manage the pressures on the marine environment created because of our dependence on the resources provided by the ocean.

We have also seen the progressive development of a sophisticated and balanced legal regime, open to equal participation by developed and developing States, anchored in the precautionary approach, transparency, and equity, and making a meaningful contribution to 12 of the 17 SDGs.

This year, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Convention, which gives us an opportunity to reflect on how much has been achieved so far as well as to look forward. The lessons learned from this experiment can help to shape future discussions on ocean governance and the sustainable development of the ocean and its resources.

The Authority stands ready to work with each and everyone of you in this endeavour.

Thank you very much.
