
'Statement on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda at the 27th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority on 2nd August 2022, Kingston, Jamaica

Presented by Hon A. Dean Jonas MP, Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and The Blue Economy

Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election at this 27th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority. We also extend our support for your leadership in the conduct and fruitful conclusion of this meeting.

In addition, I would like to wholeheartedly express appreciation to the host country Jamaica for their usual warm hospitality and excellent meeting arrangements.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary General for his very comprehensive and informative report on the progress made in the past year. We unequivocally express our appreciation for the substantial and considerable progress that is underway concerning the implementation of the Strategic Plan. We acknowledge the achievements made in monitoring the intergovernmental conference and its legally binding instruments as well as the contracts for exploration. The Authority's current work programmes serve to continue the crystallization of its objectives which is ultimately raising its profile internationally. We note under this new dispensation, the high level of commitment with which the Authority continues to discharge its administrative and legal obligations in the management of the deep seabed and its resources that are the common heritage of mankind.

Mr. President, concerning the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023, and the performance indicators set to measure and monitor the plan's achievements through-out the five-year span; we wholeheartedly endorse and welcome the Authority's efforts to continue to

pivot with these programmes that were designed based on assessed needs of the Authority members. Of particular note, is the projected workload and resources including the international processes, principles, agreements and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Antigua and Barbuda therefore endorses the Authority's efforts, and recognizes the importance of employing performance indicators and monitors to ensure the promotion of direction and implementation of the mandate over this extended time. We further recognize the Authority's adherence to development and note that this programme is contemplated using as one of the most important vehicles, that of sustainability.

Mr. President, in regard to the Intergovernmental Conference on internationally legal binding instruments as it relates to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity areas beyond national jurisdictions under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, my delegation is hopeful. As the global demand for renewable energy increases and the focus now pivots to the ocean to augment supply, it is paramount that we have a clear understanding of how it can be utilised sustainably with its conservation in mind. As such, we look forward to the discussions in which we may embrace our readiness to work with and accept the Authority's support within its existing mandate, to give life to the new implementing agreement under negotiation.

Mr. President, with respect to the development of the contracts for exploration, Antigua and Barbuda applauds the Secretariat for the progress being made in on-going draft contracts for exploration as well as the development of their regulations and the draft standards and guidelines. As it relates to marine mineral research and the related comprehensive legal regime required to support it, our delegation is excited by the focus on education and research and is hopeful the region will be a leader in this area. Antigua and Barbuda is committed to supporting the goals of the Agency and look forward to how the outcomes of this focus on education, research and development, is applied.

Mr. President, as with any emerging sector, there will be for the long term, significant work to be done in making progress towards the goal of making the sector both viable and sustainable. My delegation shares in the momentum that continues to build within the Authority. As such, and in hopes of a continued momentum towards our shared goals, Antigua and Barbuda urges all members of the Authority to make both their current and past contributions in accordance with the Convention. It is only through our joint support that we can continue to move forward together.

Mr. President, in 2020, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda made the decision to expand its ministerial portfolios to include the Blue Economy which is globally recognised as a major area for growth. As the Minister for this new portfolio, I have been busy working with key stakeholders to drive the development of a framework within which to operate.

The Maritime Blue Economy Plan (MBEP) is the blueprint or guiding document for the Department of the Blue Economy. The MBEP, coupled with the Gap Analysis, outlines the Mandate with the main goal being to diversify the country's economy through the sustainable and responsible use of ocean or marine based resources.

As outlined in the MBEP, the Mandate of the newly established Department of the Blue Economy is:

- To help Antigua and Barbuda unleash the potential of its blue economy for the long-term benefit of all its people and to support its economic and social recovery from the adverse impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
- To serve as the collaborative body for all marine and ocean-based bodies, with its main purpose being to bring all existing stakeholders together and to diversify the country's economy with ocean-based resources.

The MBEP and the draft National Ocean Policy (NOP) have outlined four (4) main priority areas as the pillars of the Blue Economy:

Priority One: A strong tourism industry as an economic anchor

Priority Two: Better utilisation of the marine area

Priority Three: Improve collaboration to support the Blue Economy

Priority Four: Adopting an Island Systems Management Approach

Furthermore, as the Blue Economy is still quite a new Department, training and capacity building are ranked among our top priorities. Hence, it was for this reason that staff members participated in the **First Training Workshop on “Mineral Resources, Environmental Management and Data”** that was organised by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and the China Joint Training and Research Centre from 24th – 26th May, 2022. This very informative course provided valuable knowledge and insight which has served to enable our team to make forward strides in our work.

Additionally, we have been working assiduously with our local, regional and international partners to operationalize the Centre of Excellence for the Blue Economy at the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus in Antigua and Barbuda by 2023. The future looks bright and we are hopeful for economic transformation through responsible use of our marine resources.

Antigua and Barbuda would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our full support for the Authority. As a delegation, we seek to continue to further contribute to the work of the Authority and remain encouraged by the level of progress and the key initiatives being taken to re-energize the organization. We are confident that the Authority will continue to make important contributions and all the necessary decisions to support the framework provided by the Convention.

Thank you.