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STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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I wish to thank the General Assembly for the many positive references to the work of the International Seabed Authority in the draft resolution before the Assembly. The overwhelming support of Member States for the work of the Authority is very much appreciated.

As always, I also wish to acknowledge the extraordinary support and cooperation from the Office of the Legal Counsel and the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. We continue to work closely together in a spirit of cooperation to respond to and support the needs of Member States, including in the context of UN-Oceans.

This year we were particularly pleased to concretize this cooperation by jointly hosting with DOALOS a regional workshop in support of the third cycle of the Regular Process in Kingston, Jamaica. We continue to be willing to extend our support to ongoing processes, including during the closing stages of the intergovernmental negotiating conference.

Mr. President,

Part VI of the draft resolution highlights the progress made by the Council of the Authority in advancing its discussions on the development of the draft regulations for exploitation of minerals in the Area. I wish to congratulate the Council and all Members of the Authority on the excellent progress made during 2022 and on the adoption of a roadmap for the continuation of this work into 2023.

Completion of the regulatory regime is a fundamental part of the evolutionary approach to the establishment and work of the Authority encapsulated in the 1994 Agreement. It is work that the Authority must do to fulfill its mandate to protect the marine environment as well as to protect the rights of all States Parties to conduct activities in the Area in accordance with the rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority.

It is in the interests of all Members of the Authority to ensure that there is clarity in the legal framework and to remove regulatory uncertainty and risk. Completing the regulations in a timely manner is the best way to ensure that any exploitation activities in the Area take place in a way that ensures effective protection of the marine environment in accordance with the Convention.

Mr. President,

Over the past five years of my mandate, I have worked intensively with Members of the Authority to put in place a strategic framework to deliver more effectively the mandate of the Authority.

This framework includes the Strategic Plan, adopted in 2018, a High-Level Action Plan, and an Action Plan in support of the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. I wish to express my satisfaction that the Assembly of the Authority completed this strategic framework by adopting a decision relating to the implementation of a programmatic approach to capacity development and approving the establishment of the International Seabed Authority Partnership Fund at its twenty-seventh session in August 2022.

These decisions will enable the Authority to redouble its efforts to provide tangible and meaningful capacity-building and capacity-development opportunities to address the needs identified by developing States Members of the Authority. I look forward to working with all Members to develop the new Partnership Fund as a platform for increased international collaboration in support of the Authority's mandate.

I am looking forward as well to sign, after the approval of the Council, the long-awaited Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union, which I believe will further elevate our constructive partnership with African States Members of the Authority.

The strong interest of African States to participate in the regime for the Area and make use of the opportunities given to them by the Convention was underlined at the Authority's international workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2022. More than 300 participants from eight African States attended this workshop, which took place as part of the Africa Deep Sea Resources project, supported by NORAD. We were also pleased to welcome to the Secretariat, the final group of African experts supported by this project. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to NORAD and the Government of Norway for their consistent support to the work of the Authority and capacity development.

Another key priority for the Authority has been to implement the Action Plan in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science. The full implementation of the Action Plan is essential to the effective application of the precautionary approach, which already governs all aspects of the work of the Authority, as it serves to advance the scientific basis for continuous improved assessment of the impacts and risks related to deep-seabed exploration and future exploitation activities.

A major step forward was taken at the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, with the launch of the Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SSKI), with the financial support of the European Commission. An inception workshop for SSKI supported and hosted by the Government of Korea, took place in Korea last week. I welcome the strong support of the European Commission and the Government of Korea for deep-sea science and encourage others to join us in this ambitious, multi-year programme of scientific discovery for the benefit of all.

Mr. President,

As part of the global celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Convention, the Authority was delighted to organize the first-ever Women in the Law of the Sea Conference in September 2022 here in New York. The conference celebrated the contribution of women to the development of the law of the sea, their participation in the institutions created by the Convention and related regional and sub-regional organizations, and discussed the pathways for enhancing the potential for women to contribute to the law of the sea in the future. I wish to thank all those who participated and to particularly express my appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Singapore for its support for the Conference.

Finally, Mr. President, as we mark this fortieth anniversary year, it would be remiss of me not to mention the constant support for the Authority and its Secretariat given by our host country, Jamaica. Yesterday, we heard a very moving statement from the Permanent Representative of Jamaica. I wish to fully concur with his remarks.

The Authority remains the only global organization to have its headquarters in a small island developing State. I am sure I speak on behalf of all Members of the Authority when I say that we sincerely appreciate everything that Jamaica has done for us over the years and everything that the spirit of Jamaica contributes to the identity of the Authority.

As we move into 2023 with an accelerated programme of meetings for the Council and a determination to complete the Mining code, I look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to Jamaica.
