



**Side Event at CBD COP-15 on SSKI: Innovating global scientific collaboration
to advance our understanding of deep-sea biodiversity**

Montreal, Canada

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STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for joining our side event today to introduce ISA's Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative, or SSKI.

I am particularly delighted to have the Executive Secretary of CBD with us today, which is a reflection of the excellent cooperation between ISA and CBD. ISA processes have benefited considerably over the years from the scientific and technical advice provided through CBD and we value our cooperation very highly.

We are also very much committed to supporting relevant CBD processes where possible and within the context of our own very specific mandate.

I firmly believe that ISA's unique experience in implementing the legal regime contained in UNCLOS – which makes us the only international organization mandated to ensure protection and sustainable use of a global commons for humanity's benefit – has great potential to support the delivery of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and other international processes.

I am coming to COP15 direct from New York where we have just celebrated the fortieth anniversary of UNCLOS and the General Assembly has reaffirmed once again that UNCLOS provides the legal framework within which all activities in the seas and oceans are carried out.

It is under UNCLOS, of course, that ISA was created as the international machinery to regulate and manage deep sea mineral exploration and future exploitation, prevent unilateral and unregulated access to

the deep sea, promote scientific research and transfer of technology and ensure that all the benefits of the resources of the deep ocean – monetary and non-monetary – are shared for the benefit of all.

So, what is the state of play?

We now have the benefit of more than 40 years of scientific research in the deep sea, with the last 28 years of that work under the multilateral framework of UNCLOS and ISA.

We could say, in fact, that ISA has been leading a new age of deep-sea science and exploration which prioritizes the collection of environmental data to specifications designed by ISA. Over the past 20 years, contractors have invested more than \$260 million on ISA-mandated environmental studies.

The results from this research not only provide the foundation for science-based measures to protect the marine environment, but also help us to develop a global regulatory framework for future mineral exploitation based on the best available scientific evidence.

This represents the first time a complete regulatory framework has been developed before an activity takes place and a unique opportunity to get it right.

These efforts have not only revolutionized deep-sea science, in particular taxonomy, but also increased its capability to deliver biodiversity information at the speed and scale necessary and desirable for further enhancing evidence-based measures to protect deep-sea biodiversity and ensure sustainable management of seabed resources, aligned with the vision and goals of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Our task now is to scale up these actions even more.

And that is why our new flagship initiative, SSKI, is so important.

Through SSKI, we can achieve two complementary strategic outcomes:

First, we can make a real contribution to advancing scientific knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems and biodiversity in the Area. Already, ISA's global database, DeepData, holds over 158,000 data records on species abundance, including nearly 60,000 species occurrence records. One of the objectives of SSKI is to increase the number of described deep-sea species by at least 1,000.

Second, we can create the enabling conditions for all countries, including the less technologically advanced countries, to participate effectively and build their own scientific expertise leading to better ownership of the results generated. Some of the specific plans in this regard you will hear during the presentations, but I want to emphasize that this goes to the heart of ISA's mandate – ensuring full participation of developing countries in all aspects of activities in the international Area.

Of course, none of this is possible without collaboration and cooperation. That is why I am so pleased to acknowledge and welcome colleagues from the European Commission, our major donor to SSKI so far, as well as our partners from MABIK.

I also wish to welcome the European Union Council conclusions announced yesterday supporting the important work being done within the framework of ISA to establish a sound regulatory regime on potential future deep-sea mining that is based on the precautionary approach as well as on the highest environmental standards and sufficient scientific knowledge, as well as the EU's support for SSKI and the ISA's Action Plan in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

I hope you enjoy the side event and I look forward to collaborating with all of you.
