



5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5)

Side Event on “Leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation in the deep-seabed to build prosperous and resilient LDC economies through the Doha Programme of Action”

Doha, Qatar

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STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Honorable Prime Minister Victoire Sidemehou Tomegah-Dogbe, Prime Minister of Togo,

Honorable Minister Fekita ‘Utoikamanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs and tourism of Tonga,

Honorable Minister Abshir Omar Jama, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to discuss and exchange concrete ideas to support the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action by leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation in the deep seabed.

Forty years ago, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea identified the international seabed area as the common heritage of humankind and established ISA to act as trustee.

The regime sets out by UNCLOS to co-manage this global common operates on the fundamental principal that the interests of all States are taken into account. It is one of the few international governance regimes that specifically integrates the interests and needs of developing States, with a particular focus on geographically disadvantaged and vulnerable States, particularly LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Marine scientific and technical capacities of participating stakeholders lie at the core of this legal regime.

In this context, and since I took office in 2017, I have attached the utmost importance to empowering LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS to take advantage of the opportunities available to them under UNCLOS, including through dedicated programmes and activities.

The need for improved capacities and access to marine scientific research programmes in the international seabed Area for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS has been recognized as a priority by our member States at the highest strategic level. It is clearly anchored in the Strategic Action Plan and the High Level Action adopted in 2018 and 2019, the Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development adopted in 2020 and more recently, the Capacity Development Strategy adopted in 2022.

A few examples of ISA's concrete actions include:

1. The launch in 2021, of a series of publications dedicated to raising awareness on the provisions and benefits of UNCLOS for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in a way that is accessible and transparent.
2. The Africa's Deep Seabed Resources Project in collaboration with the African Union and the generous support of the Government of Norway, that has provided secondment opportunities within the ISA Secretariat on scientific, technical and legal matters for 10 African experts from eight different countries including 3 LDCs (Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe). As of today, under this project four regional training workshops have been organized respectively in Cote d'Ivoire (2018), South Africa (2019), Mauritius (2021) and Nigeria (2022) and benefitted over 400 stakeholders from 38 countries¹ including 24 LDCs.
3. Since 2018, together with UN-OHRLLS, we have been implementing a dedicated initiative "Women in Deep Sea Research Project" to support participation and leadership of women in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in deep sea science and related disciplines. One of the key outputs of this project was a study launched at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference that presents the results of the first-ever gender mapping of the deep-sea research sector and an analysis of critical barriers faced by women in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in participating and accessing leadership positions in these disciplines. The study was based on a survey in 23 LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, out of which 4 were LDCs.
4. More recently we have partnered with the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries for the implementation of a totally new initiative that will be entirely dedicated to build and develop capacities of LDCs in deep-sea science, technology and innovation in support of sustainable development of emerging ocean economies.

We need to do more, and I invite you to join hands with us to achieve concrete and meaningful results to meet your needs and contribute to the DoA in support of the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.

¹ **Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ghana, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia**