



## **International Women's Day**

**8 March 2023**

### STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Although every day is an opportunity for us to highlight the critical contribution of women and girls in all aspects of ocean affairs, it is with great pleasure that the International Seabed Authority (ISA) joins the global celebration of International Women's Day.

The full commitment of ISA Members towards advancing the empowerment and leadership of women is reflected at both strategic and programmatic levels. This commitment is firmly embedded in the Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan for 2019-2023. It has guided specific actions and outputs in the Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research adopted by the ISA Assembly in 2020 in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and, more recently, the Capacity Development Strategy adopted by the Assembly in 2022.

Since 2018, ISA has implemented the Women in Deep-Sea Research project in partnership with the office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States (UN-OHRLLS). This is in addition to more than 20 other partners representing Members (Argentina, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Madagascar, Malta, Nauru, Nigeria, South Africa), scientific organizations (National Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea, National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Egypt, National Oceanography Centre of UK), international and regional organizations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, Indian Ocean Rim Organisation, Pacific Community), and contractors (Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, Germany, Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd., Japan, Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, Belgium, Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer, France, Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd., Kiribati, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc., Nauru, Tonga Offshore Mining Ltd., Tonga). Each of these contractors has pledged to

reserve 50 per cent of training opportunities under the Contractors' Training Programme to qualified women whenever possible. As of today, over 220 women have benefited from the Programme.

In June 2022, ISA launched a **flagship report**, [Empowering women from least developed countries \(LDCs\), landlocked developing countries \(LLDCs\) and small island developing countries \(SIDS\) in deep-sea research](#). This report presents a gender mapping of the deep-sea research field and related disciplines in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and an analysis of the barriers women in these countries face in accessing leadership positions. It concluded that the underrepresentation of women in ocean science constitutes a significant impediment to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the achievement of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development necessitating a systemic change to reduce the gender gap in ocean science today. The report's findings contribute to the discussion on ways to foster international and regional cooperation for concrete actions supporting women's empowerment and leadership in deep-sea research.

In September 2022, ISA, in partnership with Singapore, Malta and UN-OHRLLS, successfully organized the first-ever **Women in the Law of the Sea** conference in New York. This three-day event was organized to mark the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of UNCLOS highlighted essential contributions of women to the development and implementation of the law of the sea. The conference featured contributions from 47 women experts, including 27 from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

As an [International Gender Champion](#) since 2020, I have also been personally committed to promoting transformative change at all levels.

I am proud to report that the representation of women at the ISA Secretariat has continued to grow. Today, 58 per cent of ISA staff members are women, including in senior positions. A key achievement was ensuring specific measures were adopted to facilitate their professional engagement without compromising their essential family roles. We have implemented policies to provide our female staff with the necessary conditions, such as the [Policy on Breastfeeding](#) (2020) which creates the necessary support for staff members who are nursing mothers to travel with their breastfeeding infants on official business.

In June 2022, the International Gender Champions Network launched the [Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women](#), which I have the honor of co-chairing with H.E. Mr. Viliami Va'inga Tōnē, Permanent Representative of Tonga to the United Nations and Under-Secretary-General, Miguel de Serpa Soares, Legal Counsel to the United Nations. The Impact Group on Research and Oceans for Women provides a platform to facilitate synergies and collective actions to increase the participation of women in ocean affairs.

Finally, recognizing that change happens at an early age, ISA is launching a [Wakatoon](#), "Discover the seabed with Olivia", a fun activity for children between the ages of 4 and 12 to learn about the deep sea, its incredible creatures, its environment and the work of ISA to explore and protect it. We hope this will inspire children, especially girls, around the world.

We will not stop here. We will continue to push and break any remaining barriers to open the way for more women to lead and guide all spheres of work and life.

I invite you to join us and make gender equality a reality.

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