



## **Celebrating International Day of Biological Diversity**

**Kingston, Jamaica**

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### **STATEMENT**

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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On this occasion of the International Day of Biological Diversity, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) wishes to celebrate the diversity of life that resides in the depths of our oceans and acknowledge the role of deep-sea exploration in advancing scientific knowledge and understanding of the deep sea.

The deep sea represents the largest habitat on Earth. By promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the deep sea, particularly in areas beyond national jurisdictions and the international seabed area (the Area), ISA contributes to consolidating the knowledge base and understanding of deep-sea environments and their ecosystems for the benefit of all humanity.

Exploration cruises and scientific campaigns carried out over the past four decades by pioneer investors and then ISA exploration contractors in the Area have been instrumental in characterizing deep-sea biological communities, from microbiota to megafauna. This has contributed greatly to improving our collective knowledge of deep-sea biodiversity.

All environmental data collected during exploration campaigns are publicly available through the ISA [DeepData](#) database. In 2021, ISA further extended access to biodiversity and biogeography data contained in DeepData by becoming the first United Nations entity to serve as a node of the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS) of IOC-UNESCO. Today, the ISA OBIS node contains 63 datasets from 2004 to 2019, with data on 52,057 species observations, 1,175 organisms and 136 different species.

This knowledge informs decision-making processes and the application of the precautionary approach for the sound stewardship of the Area and its resources.

The commitment of ISA and its Members to base all decisions on the best scientific knowledge available is explicitly stated in the Strategic Plan and High-Level Action Plan of ISA for 2019-2023. This commitment was further consolidated in 2020 by adopting the Action Plan in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Under the Plan, ISA, its Members, the scientific community, industry and academia aim to leverage new tools and innovative solutions for advancing deep-sea biodiversity assessment in the Area.

In June 2022, ISA and its partners launched the **Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SSKI)** at the United Nations Ocean Conference. SSKI aims to provide a collaborative platform to generate and disseminate new knowledge needed to inform better decision-making processes and support the effective protection of the marine environment in the Area.

In particular, SSKI aims to enable the description and characterization of more than one thousand new species from the regions of the Area currently explored for mineral resources and may be targeted for future exploitation.

Today, as we celebrate the International Day of Biological Diversity, ISA is thrilled to launch a global call for projects on deep-sea taxonomy to contribute towards this target.

We invite taxonomists worldwide to leverage existing samples and datasets collected by ISA exploration contractors in the Area. Selected projects will also receive access to biological samples, research facilities and taxonomic expertise.

This is an exciting new frontier for the scientific community and humanity. I hope many will join and help us further advance the scientific knowledge and understanding of the deep sea to protect it better.

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