



**Statement by the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority,  
H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge  
on the status of the situation in the Jamaica Conference Center post-earthquake**

Part III of the Council, 28<sup>th</sup> session

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In light of the earthquake that occurred in Jamaica yesterday morning, I wish to provide the following information and reassurances to delegates.

I well understand that some delegates, particularly those who have not experienced such events before, have several concerns.

First, I should point out that Jamaica is a seismic country. The USGS has recorded 118 earthquakes in Jamaica since 1977. Yesterday's event cannot be regarded as unusual, even though it was of a greater magnitude than normal. Nevertheless, the national infrastructure remains functional, communications have not been disrupted, reported damage is minimal and the Jamaican government, including the cabinet, schools and public utilities have all returned to business as usual. At no time was any state of national disaster announced.

We all know that earthquakes cannot be effectively predicted or anticipated. In terms of the lines of responsibility for the handling of yesterday's event, I wish to remind you that the JCC is neither owned nor operated by the ISA Secretariat. Pursuant to the headquarters agreement, the primary responsibility for the safety and security of delegates lies with the host government.

In line with the headquarters agreement, the ISA Secretariat has a security plan for each session which lays down the lines of responsibility and coordination between the ISA internal security team (one person), the JCF, Fire Brigade and other national authorities, including the JCC security staff. The security plan is also fully aligned with the UN Country Team security plan, which is administered by UNDSS and follows the UN procedures and practices globally.

Immediately following the incident, the evacuation of the JCC was carried out in accordance with the correct security protocols established by the JCC; that is, persons were guided to the nearest exits by the security personnel for immediate muster in the garden. When it was ascertained safe to do so, they were then escorted to the nearest exit and reassembled in the car park, which is the designated muster point. After waiting the necessary time to see if there were any further earthquakes, the building was inspected by security and safety personnel, accompanied by the fire brigade, and persons were allowed to return once the situation was adjudged to be safe and that there was no visible sign of damage to the building or facilities. This remains the evacuation plan in the event of any other emergency.

I wish to pay tribute to the JCF, fire brigade and security teams for the highly efficient and effective way in which they reacted.

Following a brief resumption of proceedings, the meeting was suspended. At 1.44 pm the secretariat announced that the meetings would be suspended for the day.

Subsequently, steps were taken to conduct a more detailed survey of the building and surrounding infrastructure, including the ISA headquarters building. A survey was carried out by UDC engineers, accompanied by ISA security and administrative staff. That survey ascertained that there was no structural damage, that the building and all utilities were safe and fully functional, and that normal services could be resumed. There are some superficial cracks to non-load-bearing walls in the secretariat office.

All delegations were informed of the result of the survey by email circulated at 4.37 pm. At 4.46 pm, colleagues from the MFAFT also circulated an email to the diplomatic community informing them of the guidance issued by the office of national disaster preparedness.

In terms of the safety and security of the staff of the secretariat, the secretariat maintains a business continuity plan to deal with all emergency situations. Accordingly, the secretariat building was also evacuated simultaneously with the JCC. Since the event did not reach the threshold to trigger any action under the BCP following the initial evacuation, no further action was taken, although staff who wished to do so were allowed to leave early for the day to take care of immediate family commitments.

The secretariat also interacts closely with the UNDSS presence in Jamaica, and is part of the UNCT,

headed by the resident coordinator. UNDSS was informed of the situation at the JCC immediately. Again, however, after the initial evacuation, no further action was deemed to be necessary, and the UN headquarters has not issued any security alert for Jamaica.

At all times, the secretariat has also maintained close communication and liaison with the MFAFT in accordance with the headquarters agreement and the security plan. We have continued to liaise with MFAFT overnight and this morning and have been advised that further precautionary checks were carried out by UDC early this morning. These checks revealed no additional reasons for concern.

Allow me here to commend the host country for the prompt actions taken and the support provided to the Authority to ensure that it is possible today to resume the meetings of the Council with all due security reassurances.