



**Keynote Speech during Meet & Greet Cocktail Reception for Permanent Representatives of the International Seabed Authority based in New York**

New York, United States of America

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STATEMENT

by

Ms. Leticia Carvalho

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Excellencies, distinguished representatives, colleagues,

It is a privilege to be with you today, and I warmly welcome you all, including our esteemed colleagues from the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS).

I stand before you today with immense gratitude, deeply honoured by the trust that Member States have placed in me as the new Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority.

This is a moment of firsts. I am the first woman, the first Latin American and Caribbean national, and the first oceanographer to lead this institution. And while that is a milestone, I do not see it as an achievement for myself alone but as a reflection of our collective commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and the role of science in global decision-making.

As a scientist, my career has been dedicated to working at the intersection of science and governance—ensuring that decisions are informed by robust evidence and guided by principles of sustainability, equity, and transparency.

Through its Member States, the Authority holds a unique and critical mandate—as the custodian of a global commons, the deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction and its mineral resources, which are the common heritage of (hu)mankind, and as a steward of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

This is a responsibility that requires both vision and vigilance—because what we decide together, will impact not just our generation but also generations to follow.

### **A Defining Moment for the Authority:**

As we mark 30 years since the establishment of the Authority, this is an opportunity for Member States to reflect—not just on where we have been, but where we want to go.

I believe that the path forward is clear, and my vision for the Authority is guided by three fundamental priorities:

#### **1. Strengthening Ocean Governance through Transparency, Neutrality and Inclusivity.**

- My top priority is to finalise the Authority Mining Code based on science, ensuring the protection of the environment and also benefit sharing. I will support you in delivering the Roadmap that you, member states, have agreed on.
- The credibility of multilateralism depends on trust. Without trust, we cannot move forward. I am committed to ensuring that transparency, accountability, neutrality and inclusivity are at the heart of our work.
- The engagement of all Member States is essential—and I strongly encourage those that have not yet appointed Permanent Representatives to the Authority to do so. The more voices we have in the room, the stronger our vision and governance will be, and the more legitimate our collective decisions will be.

#### **2. Ensuring That No Country Is Left Behind**

- The deep seabed and its mineral resources are the common heritage of humankind. This means that all nations—not just a select few—must benefit from its governance and any potential utilisation.
- Developing States, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), LDCs and landlocked nations must have equal opportunities to engage in the Authority decision-making. In addition, I hope to encourage Member States that have historically been less engaged in the Authority to attend and be more active in contributing to its work and activities.

- Capacity building, knowledge-sharing, and technology transfer will be central to our efforts—because meaningful participation requires access to the tools, expertise, and resources needed to engage fully.

### **3. Advancing Science-Based Decision-Making and Environmental Protection**

- Every decision we make must be based on the best available scientific evidence. The stakes are too high for anything less.
- The precautionary principle will guide us as we navigate the sustainable use and management of the mineral resources of the Area, ensuring that any future seabed activities will be able to deliver for the benefit of humankind and do not cause irreversible harm to marine ecosystems.
- I will work closely with scientific institutions and experts to encourage them to contribute to the work of the Authority and ensure that the best available science is brought to the decision-making table. I will also engage with all relevant UN agencies and in other international ocean processes to ensure that the Authority remains firmly committed to its unique mandate while also aligning with global sustainability commitments and emerging frameworks such as the BBNJ Agreement.

### **An Inclusive and Transparent ISA**

The 29th session of the ISA Assembly in July 2024 saw unprecedented levels of participation—a clear signal that the world is watching. As Secretary-General, I am committed to:

- Fostering open and constructive dialogue with all ISA stakeholders, including those without a permanent mission in Kingston.
- Ensuring inclusivity in all discussions—because our collective future depends on it.
- Building trust and accountability by advancing transparent decision-making and regular engagement with member states, civil society, and the broader global community.

This transition is a moment for renewal and reform—a chance to bring the Authority in line with contemporary governance standards and expectations from the international community.

### **A Shared Responsibility for the Future of the Ocean**

We stand at a crossroads. The decisions we make today will shape the future of ocean governance, and global equity for generations to come. The world is looking to us—not just to manage and preserve the deep ocean and its resources, but to govern it wisely and responsibly.

Let us seize this opportunity to advance responsible ocean governance, uphold the vision of UNCLOS, and embrace the deep seabed—our shared inheritance—for the benefit of all humankind.

Thank you.

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