



**Thirtieth Session of the Assembly - Part II
Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the International Seabed Authority**

Kingston, Jamaica

23 July 2025

OPENING REMARKS

by

Ms. Leticia Carvalho,
Madam Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

Mr. President of the Assembly,

Excellencies,

Colleagues, friends—It is a deep honour to welcome you to this moment of shared significance: the 30th Anniversary of the International Seabed Authority.

Let me begin by expressing sincere thanks to you, President of the Assembly for your elegant leadership and kind introduction. And to you, my lovely friend, Senator the Honorable Kamina J. Smith you are the epitome of an influential female leader.

Let me especially recognize the Government and people of Jamaica, our gracious host country. For three decades, Jamaica has not only provided the physical home of the ISA—but has nurtured its spirit. From the corridors of this very Conference Centre, Jamaica has helped nurture the spirit of multilateralism that defines our institution today.

To His Excellency the President of Palau, thank you for reminding us that small island developing States – or more appropriately Big Ocean States - have long stood at the helm of leadership and innovation in global ocean governance—championing the principles of intergenerational equity, sustainability, and stewardship... core ISA principles.

In this Assembly, over the last two days, I have felt a pursuit of harmony despite our differences. This represents the very foundation of multilateralism. And so, I thank each and every one of you, for this.

Therefore, today is more than an institutional milestone.

It is a celebration of a shared idea:

That the deep seabed—the largest area of the planet outside national jurisdiction—must be governed not by power, but by principles.

Not by unilateralism, but by cooperation.

Not for profit alone, but for the benefit of all humankind.

And thirty years ago, the world gave that responsibility a home: the International Seabed Authority, established under the legal framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement.

In a time of geopolitical uncertainty, the ISA stands as a pillar of stability and international cooperation—an enduring platform where States work together to uphold the rule of law and steward the global commons.

A place where 169 Member States and the European Union come together—grounded in law and guided by science—to steward what UNCLOS calls the common heritage of humankind.

This is not a poetic ideal. It is binding international law—and a collective duty we are entrusted to uphold.

We have established a legal framework that balances resource management with the duty to protect the marine environment.

A little known fact is that we have safeguarded over 1.9 million square kilometers of seabed from future exploitation. We have deepened global access to scientific data and expanded opportunities for developing States through training, technology transfer, and capacity building.

And, yes, we are still at work. Together, we are now in the decisive phase of finalizing the Mining Code: what must be science-based, framework that will ensure any future activity in the Area is undertaken with fairness, transparency, and environmental care.

As the first woman, first Latin American, and first oceanographer to serve as Secretary-General of the ISA, I recognize the profound legacy I have inherited, and the extraordinary responsibility I carry.

Since stepping into this role six months ago, I have listened, I have learned, and I have committed to lead this institution with humility, courage, and clarity... as a committed public servant.

And if there is one message I carry into every room I enter, whether in Kingston, New York, or Nice, it is:

The deep sea needs rules.

And those rules must be shaped through inclusive, multilateral processes, not through isolation or impulse.

But today is not about process alone.

It is about promise.

The promise that the seabed will not become a battleground of narrow interests, but a canvas for collective action.

The promise that decisions made in this room will reflect not only what is technically possible, but what is morally responsible.

And the promise that we are not just managing a resource, we are stewarding a legacy.

I want to close by looking forward.

Because, while this moment is about 30 years of institutional achievement, it is also about the generations who will live with the world we leave behind.

And, as we look ahead, the next chapter of the ISA will not be written by any one voice or vision. It will be written by the collective will of our global community—by how boldly we choose to act, how responsibly we choose to govern, and how inclusively we choose to lead.

The strength of this institution comes from multilateralism with integrity, and from the recognition that what lies beneath us connects all of us.

Thirty years ago, we were entrusted with a mandate that was both visionary and principled: to govern one of the planet's global commons on behalf of all humankind.

As Ambassador Pardo suggested to the world in 1967—and we cannot stop to call upon his point—the question is not simply who controls the seabed, but whether we will shape its future for the benefit of all, or the few.

Today, we reaffirm that mandate—with renewed purpose, deeper humility, and unwavering commitment to a future that is just sustainable and anchored in the rule of law.

Happy birthday to you, ISA, and the ISA family. What an honour to be your leader and I hope we have a great time today.

I thank you all and I thank you President.