



Thirtieth session of the Council - Part II

International Seabed Authority

Kingston, Jamaica

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STATEMENT

by

Madam Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority,

Leticia Carvalho

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address you today at the opening of Part II of the thirtieth session of the Council—now, my second, as Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority.

I am so pleased to again welcome each and every one of you to beautiful Kingston- our Member State representatives, as well as stakeholders—Civil Society, Contractors and Media—

And, as always, to extend a special thanks to our host country. Jamaica has played an integral role in fostering the spirit of international dialogue and multilateral engagement that defines this institution.

Jamaica's deep connection to the ocean, and consistent support for sustainability, equity, and marine protection, have helped anchor the ISA's work in both principle and place.

Excellencies, as we gather to shape the future of the deep seabed, let us remember that these negotiations are not just about rules- they are about legacy.

The wisdom of the ages is a good starting point, “we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” Every decision we make here is a promise to those who will come after us – a vow that we did not take more than the ocean could give, that we prioritized protection over plunder.

With this said, let me express, esteemed delegates, what I perceive should be our laser focus of this session. And that focus is this: The Deep Sea Needs Rules.

In the context of the work of the International Seabed Authority, this means having regulations, and their requisite standards and guidelines, that will provide a clear roadmap for all future activities, aligned with our mandate to regulate and protect.

I had a unique and fantastic opportunity to pilot test this narrative at the recent UN Ocean Conference held in Nice, France, one month ago. At UNOC3, the ISA was given a very high profile through our plenary intervention, through a significant number of Head of State level engagements and through participation in the high-level Ocean Action Panel on enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Through these events, I took every opportunity to answer two questions that stakeholders were asking: 1) what does the future hold for ISA in the context of potential unilateral action; and 2) what is my position on deep-sea mining.

As the Secretary-General of an intergovernmental body like the ISA, my duty is very clear: to facilitate constructive dialogue and negotiations to achieve consensus on the way forward.

It is therefore not for me to articulate a position for or against deep sea mining. This is a decision that lies squarely with you, the Parties, who will need to navigate based on the best available science, market needs, economics, environmental concerns and consultation with your constituents.

However, I can hold a position. And this position is that parties to UNCLOS and ISA need to deliver a strong, science-based regulatory regime that will ensure effective governance of the future exploitation of mineral resources in the deep sea and protect the marine environment, aligned with the established roadmap from 2023.

These regulations are essential to completing the legal framework entrusted to the Authority under UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement. As the exclusive steward of the deep seabed, this is our obligation. It is also the best tool we have to prevent the chaos that unilateral action could bring.

I was echoed in this point by the UN Secretary-General who stated at UNOC3 that the deep seabed can not become the Wild West. What will prevent the Wild West are the rules.

Therefore, making real progress on what UNCLOS asks us to do must be our laser focus.

In this regard, the stakes are high—not just for the Council, but for the international community as a whole. Make no mistake, the world is watching.

Through this lens, I am confident that we can all be united in agreement--- that multilateralism anchored in rules-based governance is the only reliable pathway.

Let us join hands in this mission, with shared values rooted in pragmatism.

I believe that we are well on our way towards positive outcomes. Last Friday, we concluded the deliberations of the Legal & Technical Commission and the Finance Committee. I was able to witness first-hand the dedication and commitment of these fantastic experts from all parts of our blue planet.

Let me welcome and commend the important ongoing work of the LTC in developing environmental thresholds and the guidelines for the Regional Environmental Management Plans.

Both are complex and critical undertakings which are at the core of the ISA's mandate to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment. These efforts have required sustained dedication from the LTC, particularly during the intersessional period, and we are grateful for their tireless efforts.

I also acknowledge and appreciate the valuable contributions of other experts and scientists, nominated by members of the Authority and other stakeholders. Their insights and experiences effectively complemented the work of the LTC.

While we recognize the need for more marine scientific research, the precautionary approach offers us a responsible and science-based solution to manage uncertainty in an adaptive manner. This approach underpins the development of both thresholds and Regional Environmental Managements Plans, recognized internationally as effective methods for assessing and mitigating environmental impacts.

To the Finance Committee, I extend a debt of gratitude for your meticulous efforts both to oversee ISA's financial sustainability and to make real progress on formulating how to bring to life to the aspiration that any future proceeds from the Authority's activities will benefit all of humankind-- with equity, fairness and firmly anchored in our unique common heritage principle.

I want to emphasize that the LTC and Finance Committee are the engines for delivering on our mandate. I look forward to strengthening this invaluable collaboration; they have my full commitment to provide what is needed to continue making breakthroughs.

In closing, I express mine and my team's full support to the President of the Council, who has shown unwavering dedication and leadership, notably through his preparatory visit to Kingston and his consistent engagement with Member States in the lead-up to this session.

Distinguished delegates, we have in our hands a set of practical and balanced working tools that provide a clear path forward. These tools are designed to enable focused and transparent discussions. I encourage all delegations to engage with the process in a spirit of collaboration, determination, and shared responsibility.

Finally, as we gather here, it is with great pride and a deep sense of appreciation that I inform you that we will also use the occasion of the upcoming Assembly to commemorate our 30th anniversary.

While the ISA's formal anniversary falls on 16 November 2024, observing the entry into force of UNCLOS, we will take this moment in July 2025 to reflect on and celebrate three decades of collective achievement, global cooperation and shared responsibility for the stewardship of the Area.

Thirty years ago, the world entrusted us with a profound responsibility. Today, in this spirit, let us commence our council—honoring that trust- with courage, enthusiasm and goodwill.

Dear friends, on a final note, as I begin my sixth month as Secretary General, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Member States for your ongoing support as, together, we work to bring this organization to the highest standard of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. This type of organizational change inevitably brings both enthusiasm and skepticism.

However, I firmly believe that enthusiasm is the dominate sentiment amongst staff and stakeholders. With the support of the whole ISA Secretariat, I am resetting the principles which are now firmly embedded in all activities of the Secretariat.

I am also re-establishing the systems of internal justice along the best legal and administrative practices.

Our journey will sometimes encounter treacherous waters, but I promise to uphold the mission, listening and adapting, with the utmost integrity and sense of purpose.

As the native American Dakota teach, “we will be known forever by the tracks we leave.” Let us ensure that our tracks are based on wisdom and stewardship, not on haste and harm.

The deep sea is counting on us all. We must aim for nothing less than to leave tracks worthy of our children's future.

I thank you.