



## High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

*Interactive Panel Discussion on 'Restoring the Conditions for SDG Progress in African Countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries'*

Virtual Event

**8 July 2021**

INTERVENTION

By H.E. Michael W. Lodge,  
Secretary-General of the International Seabed  
Authority  
as Ministerial Respondent

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I welcome the opportunity to respond to this important discussion. There is no doubt that collectively, we have a pressing obligation to prioritize support for African countries and in particular, LDCs and LLDCs to ensure a sustainable and resilient recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

Since taking office in 2017, I have attached the utmost importance to empowering African States, LDCs and LLDCs, to take advantage of the opportunities open to them under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Fundamentally, the mission of the International Seabed Authority is to strengthen capacity in order to promote the effective participation of developing States in deep sea exploration and to ensure that the benefits of marine science and technology are distributed equitably. In this sense, the Authority serves as a platform for international cooperation in which the specific interests and needs of developing States including African States and LDCs LLDCs and SIDS are explicitly recognized in the governance structure.

I am committed to redouble our efforts to support these countries to participate effectively in all aspects of the work of the Authority and for that, to mobilize political will and resources to build and develop the capacity of the most vulnerable. The objective is to ensure ownership through informed decision-making processes that can support the development of new opportunities for socio-economic development.

Let me point to some specific partnerships and opportunities:

- In partnership with Norway, AMDC and the AU, ISA is committed to the Africa Deep Sea Resources Project, which aims to build capacity and assist African States, including

LDCs and LLDCs to better understand the economic potential of deep-sea resources in the deep ocean.

- In partnership with UN-OHRLLS and more than 10 governments, private sector entities and regional and international organizations, ISA has launched the Women in Deep-Sea Research Project, aimed at addressing the critical challenges faced by women scientists from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The objective of this project is to fundamentally strengthen the resource base of these countries in marine science. I wish to acknowledge and thank the chairs of the three groups of countries represented within UN-OHRLLS for their support to this initiative.
- ISA has made specific commitments in the context of the accelerated roadmap for implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs. These are intended to support LLDCs to overcome the obstacles caused by geography and take advantage of specific provisions of UNCLOS.
- ISA has developed an MOU with the African Union that will further elevate our cooperation and provide a platform for more innovative partnerships to equip and empower the future generation of African leaders.

The deep sea may seem remote from the immediate and urgent challenges of today. The reality, however, is that investing today in science and technology, including the empowerment of women, is fundamental to addressing these challenges tomorrow.

The regime for the deep seabed under UNCLOS, is one of the few international governance regimes that has been designed specifically in such a way that the interests and needs of developing States are fully integrated into the regime. This organization is yours, as well as the opportunities it opens to all. I therefore urge African States, LDCs and LLDCs to continue to take full advantage of the regime and realize the benefits that are available.

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