



International Seabed Authority's contribution to the development of concept papers to be prepared for the United Nations Ocean Conference

Introduction

Following the letter of H.E Mr Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly, of 24 February 2017 on the preparatory meeting of the Conference, the final themes for the seven partnership dialogues are:

- 1) Addressing marine pollution
- 2) Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems
- 3) Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification
- 4) Making fisheries sustainable
- 5) Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets
- 6) Increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology
- 7) Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Following the letter of PGA, the Secretary-General of the Ocean Conference, Mr. Wu Hongbo, in a letter of 27 February 2017, invited Member States and Stakeholders to submit inputs to concept papers by 24 March 2017 to be prepared on each of the themes of the partnership dialogues. The ISA is pleased to submit its contribution to such an initiative particularly with regards to themes 5), 6) and 7).

5) Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs

The ISA has been established as the international body through which all States Party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) organise and control seabed-mining related activities in the Area. Many developing countries are actively participating in the work of the ISA notably through sponsorship of activities in the Area including SIDS. This is notably the case for four SIDS including Nauru, Kiribati, Tonga and the Cook Islands. Ensuring effective implementation of the regulatory framework, based on UNCLOS, is therefore of critical importance. It will ensure that developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, benefit fully and sustainably, both from increased scientific knowledge and deep-seabed mining activities undertaken in the Area, or through ISA's capacity-building programmes. To that end, strong relationships have been developed between the ISA, its member States, the contractors and regional organisations - such as the Pacific Community (SPC) - in assisting interested States, and in particular SIDS, to draft their deep seabed mining regulatory frameworks.

6) Increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology

The ISA has concluded numerous partnerships involving sponsoring research entities, scientific network and contractors over the its 22 years of its existence with a view to promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole. Such fruitful cooperation and

partnership has been essential in improving deep-sea fauna classification (macrofauna, meiofauna, megafauna) and the use of standardised taxonomic identification protocols. It is also anticipated that through the establishment of a technical cooperation framework for the collection and processing of environmental DNA, the creation of fauna (macrofauna & meiofauna) distribution atlases for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, critical progress will be made in 2017, 2018 and 2020 in assessing the possible environmental impacts arising from activities for deep-seabed minerals in the Area.

Significant progress is also expected that the ongoing collection of environmental data by ISA's contractors will contribute to publicly sharing results and information through the ISA Data Management system. Special consideration has been given to advancing scientific knowledge and development of research capacity for developing States, in particular for SIDS and LDCs. Essentially this will be implemented through its Endowment Fund and Contractor training programmes. Both have contributed to increasing participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing States in marine scientific research programmes.

7) Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

The ISA has the responsibility to ensure effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from exploration and exploitation of minerals in the Area. Several partnerships have been concluded by the ISA to fulfill this duty. This is notably the case when implementing and monitoring the Environmental Management Plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone or when cooperating for the identification of relevant criteria for the development of an Atlantic Strategic Environmental Management Plan (SEMPIA). Some of the partnerships have proven to be critical for strengthening intergovernmental collaboration for the purpose of conserving the unique ecosystem of selected areas beyond national jurisdiction such as in the North-East Atlantic or in the Sargasso Sea.

In partnership with member States, UN agencies and other intergovernmental organisations, the ISA is regularly organising sensitisation seminars in order to address the environmental, legal and technical challenges of deep-sea mining and to improve regional cooperation in scientific research and marine mineral development.

A major effort currently underway is the development of regulations for the exploitation of resources in the Area. This will provide the necessary framework for regulating and managing exploration and exploitation of deep-sea activities in the Area in a sustainable manner, and contribute to the effective implementation of international law as reflected in UNCLOS. Further study and discussions with member States, research entities and academia will also be instrumental for the ISA to progress in the determination of the required elements to implement article 82 of UNCLOS and in so doing, identify equitable sharing criteria that will take duly into account the interests and needs of developing States, particularly the LDCs and the land-locked among them.

Through their partnership, the ISA and the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC), jointly contribute to addressing potential risks of interference between the laying of submarine cables on the high seas and in the Area, and the conduct of exploration and exploitation activities in the Area. It is anticipated that such fruitful collaboration will be further enhanced through the development of a joint code of conduct as well as the establishment of a public registry of data on the location of exploration areas under contract with the ISA, proposed exploration areas and areas where cables have been laid.

Kingston, Jamaica
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