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Statement

by

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at the

**International workshop on capacity development, resources and needs  
assessment**

Jamaica Conference Centre  
International Seabed Authority  
Kingston, Jamaica  
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Excellences,

Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, Mr Michael Lodge

Ladies and gentlemen,

I appreciate being able to join you at this very important workshop on capacity building, resources and needs assessment. The Seabeds are our common resource frontier.

I thank the International Seabed Authority for its close collaboration with OHRLLS enjoys with you. Yes it is quite the mouthful to say OHRLLS, which stands for the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing countries.

In practice OHRLLS advocates for 91 of the 193 UN member states. These 91 countries are among the most vulnerable countries around the world, totaling about 1.1 billion people.

Our mandate is to advocate of, to mobilise support for and carry out advocacy and to facilitate the coordination of the UN system support for these countries and their peoples.

We are also tasked and monitor implementation of their respective programmes of Action – namely the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs and the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs, and jointly with DESA, the SAMOA Pathway for the SIDS,

In all these programmes, we can note progress in implementation, but the bottom line is that too many are still left behind.

Indeed the LDCs are the countries that are the furthest behind. They were among a number of countries that did not meet the MDGS.

Similarly, the midterm reviews of the SAMOA Pathway for the SIDS and the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs last year, highlighted the immense challenges faced by these two groups.

Therefore, the abilities to meet the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals presents a considerable challenge but one that we together must meet.

We have ten years to meet these goals, which is not a lot of time, and 2020 is a critical year.

Addressing the SDG Summit last year, the Secretary General of the UN issued a global call for the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. In the political declaration from this summit, there was a clear commitment to take tangible action to support the most vulnerable people and countries and reach out to those who are the furthest behind first.

The focus of this workshop is right in line with this call for action, and I congratulate you on addressing the capacity needs of the most vulnerable countries, including the SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The SDGs are drivers for inclusive and sustainable transformation of economies, societies, and human behavior. They are not some abstract, or theoretical construct. They are a roadmap to leave no one behind but not in just any kind of way – they are equally about sustainability in how and what we do.

I think that everyone here have long known that oceans and seas are of paramount importance to the wellbeing, to the survival and the development of human society. After all, already some almost four decades ago, here in Jamaica you had the first meetings on the International Law of the Sea.

Today, we count over 3 billion people spread across our globe depending on coastal and marine resources. These resources are at the core of their livelihoods, they generate jobs in various industries ranging from fisheries, to shipping and to tourism.

For the SIDS and coastal LDCs, the oceans and their marine resources are the heart and lungs of their lives. They are the foundation of their economies, culture and livelihoods.

The landlocked countries of course do not have direct access to the sea. Yet their access to and use of ocean space is integral to achieving SDG14 and meeting the obligations under the Conventions of the Law of the Sea.

Currently LDCs, LLDCs & SIDS too often lack the expertise, institutional capacities and financial support to derive full benefit from the ocean and its resources in sustainable ways.

These challenges are even greater when we consider the new and emerging industries linked to marine scientific research and prospects for deep sea mining and now cost effectiveness enters the equation.

Several of the Pacific SIDS, including my own country Tonga, have embarked on mineral exploration in their waters.

For those SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs with narrow potential to expand limited land based economic structures, seabed mining has the potential to be an integral part of the blue economy, while ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects.

We must ensure that seabed exploration and exploitation deliver sustainable benefits to humankind and that those benefits are shared equitably.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The provisions in the Convention on the Law of the Sea are clear. The Area and its resources are a shared heritage of mankind.

Part XI, article 148 of the UNCLOS states that the effective participation of developing countries, in activities of the Area should be promoted, having due regard to their special interest and needs, including the special needs of land-locked countries to overcome obstacles arising from their disadvantaged geographical location, including remoteness and access to and from the sea.

But how to go about this in practical terms?

Fostering partnerships for sustainable capacity building and technical assistance to these countries will be key.

So I must congratulate the International Seabed Authority for your past, current and I anticipate strong future efforts to raise awareness and enhance participation of vulnerable countries in the activities and programmes conducted by the Authority.

The ISA voluntary commitments announced at the Ocean Conference in June 2017, also demonstrates your strong commitment to strengthen cooperation through the Abyssal Initiative for the Pacific SIDS and the cooperation announced with the African Mineral Development Center to support Africa's Blue Economy.

The draft needs assessment for this workshop is also very helpful to understand the barriers and challenges for developing countries as well as the participation rates of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in current initiatives and programmes conducted by the ISA.

OHRLLS will support you in these activities. We offer the support of my office, to raise awareness and strengthening engagement with under-represented countries on how best to support their needs.

*We can* and *we must* foster greater cooperation with the framework of the UNCLOS and through the International Seabed Authority to enhance opportunities for the most vulnerable countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just a mere decade separates us from 2030. In the Decade for Action mentioned earlier, the Secretary-General of the UN will continue to amplify the call for climate action and gender equality.

Today women account for only 38% of the world's researchers in ocean science. The rate is even lower for women from developing countries. And yet who of us is not inspired by the work of great women like Sylvia Earle – we need many more Sylvia Earle.

UN-OHRLLS partnered with ISA to officially launch its voluntary commitment initiative to increase women's active participation in marine scientific research through targeted capacity building during the 2018 Commission on the Status of Women.

My Office stands ready to continue our collaboration to address the structural challenges faced by women and support their capacity building to enhance the role of women in deep-sea scientific research to support the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to briefly mention the establishment of the Technology Bank for LDCs.

The Bank was operationalized under the auspices of OHRLLS to contribute to the development of science, technology and innovation in the world's poorest countries. The establishment of this Bank is a milestone achievement, and it is also the first SDG target to be achieved, target 17.8. The Bank bears the potential to tackle one of the great new divides of our times: access to science, technology and capacity to innovate.

It aims interalia to bring on board the collective expertise of the entire UN system to support the implementation of the SDGs at the country level.

Today we have here with us the Managing Director of the Technology Bank, Mr. Setipa. I hope that together, you will discuss the potential cooperation with the Bank to support members of the Seabed Authority that are LDCs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

2020 is an important year for our oceans. The second UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, the Our Ocean Conference in Palau in August, the BBNJ negotiations, and the UN Biodiversity Conference.

All these fora must lead to deeper engagement for capacity-building, technology transfer, and sharing of experiences to enhance opportunities for the participation of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs in the blue economy and support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

To close, I once again thank the International Seabed Authority for convening this important workshop.

I wish you all a successful and productive meeting.

Thank you.

