



Statement By

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**INFORMATION REPORTED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY**

Madam President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful once again for this opportunity to provide States Parties with information on the work of the International Seabed Authority.

Madam President,

The eighteenth session of the Authority will be held in Kingston from 16 to 27 July. On 24 July, the Assembly will commemorate the thirtieth Anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention by convening a special session. The session will include statements by distinguished participants to the Third Conference, the Preparatory Commission as well as the sessions of the Authority. The Government of Jamaica will also unveil a scroll commemorating the event. .

Madam President,

Over the past three years, the work of the Authority has increased substantially, and 2012 is no exception. A number of important issues are to be discussed and decided during the session and I wish to use this opportunity to brief States Parties on some of the most important issues that will be taken up during the forthcoming session.

Madam President,

Many of you will have noticed from the press releases issued on the Authority's website last week that the Authority has in the last two weeks received five new applications for seabed exploration licences. These new applications have been filed in respect of areas located in the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Two of the applications are for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and three relate to polymetallic nodules.

The first application was received on 21 May 2012 from the Government of the Republic of Korea. The application is for approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and the application area is located in the Central Indian Ocean.

On 23 May, IFREMER of France submitted an application for approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in an area located on the seabed of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. IFREMER's application is sponsored by the Government of France.

The third application, also submitted on 23 May 2012, was filed by UK Seabed Resources Ltd., a company sponsored by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The area applied for is in the Eastern part of the

Clarion-Clipperton Zone in the Pacific Ocean where the Authority has already issued ten contracts for exploration for nodules between 2001 and 2012.

On 30 May 2012, applications were filed by Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd., a state enterprise of the Republic of Kiribati. The application by Kiribati is in respect of reserved areas that have been made available for exploration by developing States in accordance with the provisions of Annex III to the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

On 31 May 2012, applications were filed by G-Tec Sea Minerals Resources NV, a Belgian company, sponsored by the Government of Belgium.

Both of the latter two applications relate to areas in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.

All five applications have been placed on the agenda of the Legal and Technical Commission. Once the Commission has reviewed the applications, it must forward its recommendation to the Council of the Authority, which will then decide whether to approve the applications.

Madam President,

If all these applications are approved, this will bring the number of active exploration contracts issued by the Authority to 17, compared to only 8 in 2010. By any standard, this represents a dramatic and exponential increase in the workload of the Authority. I wish to remind States Parties that the primary function of the Authority is to manage the mineral resources of the deep seabed, which are the common heritage of mankind, on behalf of mankind as a whole. It does this strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement through a contract-based licensing system. This involves issuing contracts of limited duration to those entities wishing to explore for minerals in the seabed. Clearly, the credibility of this system depends very much upon how well these contracts are monitored, supervised and enforced by the relevant organs of the Authority.

In this regard, the Legal and Technical Commission plays a vital role in not only drafting rules, regulations and procedures, but also in reviewing applications for new contracts, reviewing the annual reports submitted of contractors and in preparing advice for the Council based upon review and analysis of scientific data submitted by contractors. A critical part of the Commission's work is to advise the Council on the technical measures necessary in order to protect the marine environment from the harmful effects of seabed mining. The work of the Commission is supported by the scientific, technical and legal staff of the Secretariat.

It should be evident that, as the number of active contractors in the Area increases, so the workload of the Authority and its organs increases. This is in fact the essence of the evolutionary approach to the establishment of the Authority as set out in the 1994 Agreement. In accordance with this approach, the first 10 years of the Authority's life were devoted primarily to organizational matters – putting in place the general

institutional framework to implement the Convention and the Agreement. The substantive work programme was primarily aimed at fulfilling the functions set out in the 1994 Agreement relating to the assessment and evaluation of the mineral resources of the Area as well as beginning the process of establishing an environmental baseline for the areas of primary interest for mining. Since then, whilst the workload of the Authority has evolved, there has been no increase in the resources available to carry out that work.

The workload of the Authority now includes not only the supervision of 12 – soon to be 17 – active exploration contracts, but also the development of urgently-needed rules, regulations and procedures relating to the protection of the marine environment and future exploitation. It is very clear that the recent applications for new exploration licences have been made with a view to future exploitation, in accordance with sound commercial principles, and not simply for the purposes of scientific curiosity. This is encouraging for the Authority as an institution and for member States, who will be the ultimate beneficiaries from seabed mining in the future. However, it also means that the Authority is under pressure to now develop fair and equitable policies and regulations for the exploitation of marine minerals, as well as to deliver an appropriate level of environmental protection for the Area.

This was a point that was raised by a number of delegations at the seventeenth session in 2011, and following the discussion I was requested to prepare a strategic plan for the development of an exploitation code for the consideration of the Council and the Finance Committee this year. Such a plan has been prepared and will be placed before the Council in July. I wish to take this opportunity to forewarn States Parties, however, that the scale of the task is ambitious, and that additional resources, including additional meetings of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council, will be required to complete this work in a timely manner.

Resources will also be required to continue the baseline environmental work necessary to carry out and evaluate environmental impact assessments of deep seabed mining. In this regard, the Authority has been very active over the past year. In November 2011, in collaboration with the Government of Fiji and the SOPAC Division of the Pacific Community, the Authority held an international workshop on environmental management needs for exploration and exploitation of deep seabed minerals. One of the outcomes of this workshop was a draft template for an environmental impact assessment statement for seabed mining.

In January 2012, I convened for the first time, a meeting of all contractors to review the quality of environmental data provided by contractors and to identify how best these data could be utilized. The meeting was highly successful and addressed a number of issues. One of the requirements reinforced at the meeting was the need for taxonomic standardization. It was decided that the best method to address that need would be through taxonomic standardization workshops. Three such workshops will be convened in 2013 and 2014, and they will address the three major faunal groups

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Standardization is required in order to evaluate regional biodiversity and species ranges and to provide essential information that could be used to assess the state of the environment in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in its pristine state, after tests of mining equipment and for protection of the environment during mining. I am pleased also to report that, in light of the request made by the Council last year for more complete reporting of environmental data, some contractors have already provided additional data and all contractors have agreed to assess their inventories for raw data and to provide it, together with all data collected in the future, in a standardized electronic format. The Secretariat is in the process of reviewing and assimilating this data and will report on it, and its potential use for assessing the state of the environment in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, in due course.

Madam President,

2012 is both a budget year and an election year for the Authority. The Council and the Assembly will be asked to approve the budget of the Authority for the financial period 2013-2014, after it has been reviewed by the Finance Committee.

An election will be held for one half of the members of the Council, to serve from 2013 to 2016. An election will also be held for the Secretary-General, since my present term of office expires in December 2012. In order to facilitate the elections to the Council, the Secretariat will be preparing the usual indicative lists of States eligible for election in each group of the Council, and I urge States Parties to consult at the earliest opportunity on this matter.

Madam President,

As far as the arrangements for the eighteenth session are concerned, in order to encourage the best possible attendance, the Assembly and Council will hold their first meetings on Tuesday 17 July, thus allowing delegations additional time to arrive in Kingston. The Finance Committee will commence its meetings on 16 July, whilst the Legal and Technical Commission will commence its meetings one week prior to the main session of the Authority, from 9 to 13 July. I wish to remind States Parties that it will be the turn of the African Group to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the Assembly. It will be the turn of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the Council. I urge the regional groups concerned to consult on these matters candidacies prior to the opening of the session.

Finally, Madam President,

I wish to remind States Parties that, several years ago, the Assembly established a voluntary trust fund to help meet the travel expenses of members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee from developing countries. This fund

has been critical in ensuring that the members of these bodies from developing countries are able to attend meetings of the Authority and thus that the decisions reached by these bodies are truly representative. The expenditure from the fund is, on average, around \$50,000 per year.

I regret to inform States Parties that, as of now, the fund is virtually exhausted. The last contribution to the fund was received in 2010. Unless further contributions are made, it will not be possible to provide financial assistance from the fund this year. Clearly this situation is not desirable in the light of the important decisions that need to be taken by both the Commission and the Finance Committee. I wish to appeal to those States Parties that are in a position to do so to urgently consider making contributions to the voluntary fund.

I thank you for the opportunity to make this statement and I look forward to seeing all members of the Authority in Kingston in July. Noting that the Assembly has had a quorum on only two occasions in the last 10 years, I would like to make a special appeal to all States Parties to make their best efforts to attend and participate in the session.

4 June 2012