



# INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

30 January 2019

Dear Mr Serpa Soares,

Reference is made to your letter of 19 December 2018 inviting the contribution of the International Seabed Authority to the report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, pursuant to General Assembly resolution A/73/124.

Please find enclosed the contribution of the Authority on this important theme.

Yours sincerely,

Michael W. Lodge

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares  
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**Contributions of the International Seabed Authority  
to the report of  
the United Nations' Secretary-General on "Oceans and the law of the sea"  
to the twentieth meeting, of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans  
and the Law of the Sea (ICP).**

***"Ocean Science and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development"***

The specific and exclusive mandate of the International Seabed Authority (the Authority) is to control and manage activities related to the exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources of the deep seabed for the benefit of mankind as a whole, including by providing for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits from such activities. Other economic benefits for mankind stemming from the activities in the Area, include scientific, oceanographic and environmental knowledge gained and disseminated, as well as, samples and data made available for analysis, and new environmental technology. In order to meet such requirement, obligation lies on the contractors holding exploration contracts with the Authority, to submit the data and information collected and particularly, the results obtained from environmental monitoring programmes, including observations, measurements, evaluation and analyses of environmental parameters.

In addition, under Article 143, paragraph 2, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Authority is required to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and coordinate and disseminate the results of such research and analysis when available. This includes marine scientific research in relation to both living and non-living resources. The Authority may also carry out marine scientific research in its own right as well as in cooperation with States and international organizations. As such, the Authority has an important role to play both as a global repository of data and information relating to the resources of the Area and to the marine environment as well as a catalyst for collaborative research at the international level.

The Authority has undertaken various initiatives to ensure that these data are made easily and freely available to the global community and that data are converted into information that is useful to policymakers and decision makers.

For example, the Authority collaborates with the global scientific community to publish taxonomic atlases for the deep sea. The lack of deep-sea marine taxonomy is a major impediment for assessing deep sea marine biodiversity since existing lists of species do not provide the required information to undertake basic ecological assessment of deep-sea biodiversity. It is expected that this tool will greatly assist deep sea mining contractors and the scientific community in the assessment of the marine biodiversity of the Area.

Moreover, since the Authority adopted a new database management strategy, which includes the launch of a public facing global platform for sharing and exchange of scientific data on the deep-sea environment. The Authority's database being developed will make it possible to access environmental data and information on the deep sea, which include the collected data from over thirty years of deep ocean exploration and research in the Area.

The Authority has further strengthened the effectiveness and impact of its capacity development work by proactively seeking to enhance the role of women in marine scientific research. This is achieved through increased participation of qualified personnel in different capacity-building opportunities, such as the Contractor Training Programme, the Endowment Fund, internships and other tailored initiatives. Recognizing the real and tangible benefits to advance development progress by fully including women in marine science, the ISA believes that increasing their participation through capacity-building could effectively contribute to the enhancement of the scientific and technological capabilities of developing States, and in particular those of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Accordingly, the Authority is making significant efforts to raise awareness on the importance of the role of women in marine scientific research of the concrete additional benefits accruing to societies and economies of doing so (e.g. ISA Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep Sea Research); and give preference, when possible, to qualified female applicants, in particular from developing countries.

Moreover, the Council of the Authority endorsed in 2018 a strategy for the development of further regional environmental management plans (REMPs), in a number of priority areas where mineral exploration is taking place. These include: the MidAtlantic Ridge, the Indian Ocean triple junction ridge and nodule-bearing province, as well as the North West Pacific and South Atlantic. The establishment of REMPs, as well as the identification and designation of areas of particular environmental interests (APEIs), is highly dependent on available scientific information and data. The providers of data in this remote area are mainly contractors who are required to submit it to the Authority. Effective implementation of obligations for standardized reporting of scientific data and results, as well as environmental baselines and monitoring programmes are thus essential. In this context, the Authority will further strengthen its cooperation with a number of global and regional organizations, including IMO, IOC-UNESCO, CBD, OSPAR, NEAFC, NAFO and the ICPC, in developing the REMPs, as a valuable illustration on the contribution of ocean science for sustainable development.

These different activities are further strengthened by the strategic partnerships established between the Authority and relevant stakeholders, including the scientific community, which are further facilitated by the long-standing cooperation between the Authority and the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO).

In addition to fulfilling the Authority's mandate to collect and share information for the benefit of mankind as a whole, these efforts noted above will help to fill existing and urgent gaps in scientific information, and also serve as a catalyst for future collaborative marine scientific research. It is also envisaged that they will be instrumental to achieve the Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and enable developing countries to benefit fully from the Blue Economy.