

GRULAC SPEECH ON THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE 25TH SESSION OF ISA

Madam President,

Honorable Heads of Government and Ministers

HE Mr. Michael Lodge, Secretary-General of ISA

HE Nii Allotey Odunton, former Secretary-General of ISA

Distinguished Heads of Delegation, delegates, observers

1. On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Member States of the International Seabed Authority, I would like to emphasize, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of ISA, our joy and pride to see how much our organization has already achieved, fulfilling in great measure the ideals and objectives of those who worked so hard and so wisely to give us the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to its Part XI.

2. In these 25 years, ISA has elaborated and approved a long series of rules, regulations, guidelines and decisions, which have enabled it to sign contracts and to approve plans of work for exploration in the Area. In the last Council meeting, we approved the 30th Plan of Work for exploration – more than one per year since the establishment of ISA.

3. GRULAC has always been an active group within the ISA, contributing in many ways to its achievements. Members of GRULAC presided in the Assembly and the Council five times. GRULAC has always provided independent experts to the advisory organs of the Authority, that is, the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee and expects to do so when we finally establish the Economic Planning Commission.

Madam President

4. Our region's contribution to the Codification of International Law has been abundant, and it has been particularly important in the Law of the Sea.

5. The Principle of Territorial Sea, which developed into the doctrine of the 200 nautical miles, a thesis that gave origin to the Exclusive Economic Zone, was later enshrined in UNCLOS. This Principle was born in the Latin American and the Caribbean region.
6. It was through the Santiago Declaration of 1952, which first proclaimed 200-mile zones off Chile, Ecuador and Peru, the Montevideo and Lima Declarations of 1970 and the Declaration of Santo Domingo in 1972, that the notion of the patrimonial sea was developed.
7. Indeed, since the beginning of the negotiations of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, GRULAC has had an unquestionably important role, with many positive contributions. In 1971 a group of Latin American countries presented one of the first working documents on the regime for the seabed in the Area.
8. Later on, when discussing the creation of ISA, GRULAC succeeded in its proposal to include a specific and peculiar organ in the structure of the Authority: the Enterprise, envisaged as one of the most important tools for the benefit sharing with mankind of the common heritage that lies in the seabed and also for the participation of developing countries in future mining activities in the Area.
9. The Council and the Assembly are now working on ways and means to have the Enterprise fully operational along with the rules and regulations for exploitation.
10. GRULAC has contributed to the coherent and efficient implementation of the Convention by offering members with the highest expertise, fairness and integrity to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.
11. Members of GRULAC had also an important role in the hearings for advisory opinion issued by Dispute Chamber of the International Tribunal for

the Law of the Sea, on responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to activities in the Area.

Madam President,

12. We are now in a crucial phase of Authority's life. We are debating the rules and regulations that will allow contractors, public or private, and the Enterprise to initiate exploitation activities in the Area. It is a very challenging moment – to say the least – for all members of the ISA; and GRULAC has been presenting ideas and proposals and raising concerns to facilitate, contribute to and enrich our debates and decisions.

13. GRULAC hopes that we take decisions with the same wisdom and sense of responsibility that guided the fathers of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. There are still many concerns – from protection of the marine environment to benefit-sharing output for mankind – to be dealt with, and we must take **good** care of them to move forward in the very best possible way.

14. Quality over speed, sound responsibility, solid consensus and full respect for the common heritage of mankind must be our guiding stars while we navigate to accomplish the objectives foreseen in Part XI of the Convention.

Madam President

15. With your kind permission, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, let me **say** on behalf of the **Host Region** of ISA:

Happy 25th anniversary International Seabed Authority!

Thank you