



PRESS RELEASE  
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### **The 2022 Women in the Law of the Sea Conference opens in New York to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the adoption of UNCLOS**

On 26 September 2022, the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), **H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge**, opened the first ever Women in the Law of the Sea Conference in New York in celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The conference is organized by ISA in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Malta to ISA and the United Nations. It will take place from 26 to 28 September 2022 in a hybrid format, gathering over 330 registered participants joining either from the Permanent Mission of Singapore, the United Nations headquarters in New York or remotely.

The three-day conference is structured around nine panels featuring 45 women legal experts and practitioners from 33 countries in Eastern and Western Europe, North America, the Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean region. Of the 45 selected speakers, 27 are from the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The conference is co-chaired by **Judge María Teresa Infante Caffi** of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and **Dr. Annick de Marffy-Mantuano**, former President of the *Institut du droit économique de la mer* and former Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations.

Each of the nine panels is designed to provide the opportunity for experts and participants to exchange on current and emerging issues pertaining to the implementation of UNCLOS, such as maritime delimitations, military uses of the sea, marine scientific research and transfer of technology, protection of the marine environment, sustainable management of the ocean space and its resources within and beyond national jurisdictions, settlement of disputes, the opportunities offered to developing States by UNCLOS and how to enhance the participation of women in the law of the sea.

In his opening remarks, the ISA Secretary-General, **H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge**, stressed that “as one of the institutions established by UNCLOS, ISA’s strong commitment to achieving gender parity in marine science and ocean affairs is firm. I regard this as one of our core objectives, and I am proud that our work in this area has intensified over the past four years.”

Addressing the conference as a guest of honor, the **Hon. Minister Fekita ‘Utoikamanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga**, commended the initiative. “As we have gathered here today to celebrate the 40th anniversary of UNCLOS, through its lasting achievements, it is with particular

appreciation that we recognize the efforts to acknowledge the critical contribution made by women in the development of the law of the sea and implementation of the essential instruments that serve as foundations,” she said. “We must remember that it is only if we work together that we will be able to achieve a sustainable future for all that is gender sensitive in all its dimensions. Only with as many women in leadership positions as men will we be able to achieve healthy and clean oceans, implement responsible stewardship of the seas and see a sustainable and productive blue economy flourish,” she added.

Invited to deliver opening remarks, the **Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Counsel, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares**, underscored that “the recognition of women’s role and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective is key in our work to conserve and sustainably use the ocean and its resources, as was recognized in the outcome of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.” He added that “while it is clear that much remains to be done to fully recognize the important role of women in the law of the sea, initiatives like this conference are fundamental to highlight the intrinsic role of women in this field.”

**H.E. Ms. Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative of Malta to ISA and the United Nations and 32<sup>nd</sup> President of the Meeting of the States Parties to UNCLOS**, reiterated the need for the full, equal and effective participation of women in the law of the sea. “The challenges we face under UNCLOS, from climate change and marine pollution to the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, require gender-responsive approaches. This conference is a fantastic example of the role women increasingly continue to play in the law of the sea, and one which – as a gender champion – I personally promote,” she said.

Concluding the high-level segment of the conference, H.E. Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, reiterated the importance given by his country to gender equality in ocean affairs. “Singapore, as a strong supporter of the advancement of women and gender equality, is delighted to partner with ISA on this conference. In the year that we commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNCLOS, it is important that we showcase and celebrate the importance of women and their many contributions to the law of the sea,” he said.

Introducing the session on the topic of the maritime delimitations, **H.E. Ms. Ana Paula Zacarias, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations**, touched upon the issue of sea level rise and its impact on maritime zones. She highlighted the contribution and leadership of two women, Professors Patricia Galvao Teles and Nilufer Oral, who are leading on-going discussions at the International Law Commission on “sea-level rise in relation to international law”.

“I trust that the study group will support and feed the international community with ideas on how to address this specific issue affecting the future of maritime delimitations, and that these and other women will continue to shape the solutions that will help us respond to the challenges – old and new – that impact the present and future implementation of the law of the sea,” she said.

Further information on the WILOS Conference, including the programme and speaker profiles, is available here: <https://www.isa.org.jm/event/women-law-sea-conference>

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