



Letter of Cooperation

Between

The **Secretariat of the International Seabed Authority** (herein referred to as the “ISA Secretariat”)

Represented by the ISA Secretary General, H. E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge

And

The **Steering Committee of the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS)**,

represented by the Flanders Marine Institute (Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee – VLIZ)

This Letter of Cooperation (LoC) provides a basis for cooperative work between the ISA Secretariat and the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS).

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) was established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The ISA is the organization through which States Parties to the Convention shall, in accordance with the regime for the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (the Area) established in Part XI and the Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, particularly with a view to administering the resources of the Area. The ISA is required to take the measures necessary to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects, as set out in the Convention. In addition, ISA 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.

In 2019, the ISA launched its new database called “**ISA Deep Seabed and Ocean Database**” (**DeepData**)¹. DeepData is an integrated database system designed to serve as a geospatial data management system. The ISA holds centralized data of public and private information on marine mineral resources and environmental baseline data acquired by the contractors during their exploration activities. The contractors are required to submit the metadata and results of their sample analysis from exploration surveys in contract areas, using the digital reporting templates recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission. The environmental data, including biological, physical and geochemical parameters of the seafloor and water column ecosystems, is accessible to the public.

¹ <http://data.isa.org.jm>

The Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) is a not-for-profit, largely government funded organization based in Oostende (Flanders, Belgium). VLIZ acts as the coordination and information platform for marine and coastal-related scientific research in Flanders and serves as an international contact point. The Data Centre Division provides assistance, technologies and tools to scientists and policy makers to support marine data management. Within international networks, VLIZ participates in the development of data infrastructures and promotes the flow of marine data from Belgium. The Data Centre is a world leader in managing biodiversity data, and is part of the World Data System of the International Council for Science (ICSU). In particular, VLIZ has built-up expertise in taxonomic data management through the hosting of the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) and related taxonomically-oriented databases.

The World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS)² – including its subregisters – is managed by the WoRMS Steering Committee (WoRMS SC), which represents the editors in all matters relating to the databases, including liaison with other (international) programs, projects and initiatives concerning the databases, in close collaboration with the WoRMS Data Management Team (WoRMS DMT). The WoRMS SC is responsible for guiding the future direction and priorities for the editorial board. WoRMS itself is part of the Aphia platform, an infrastructure designed to capture taxonomic and related data which includes an online editing environment. Aphia is hosted at and managed by the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) and is an integral part of the LifeWatch Species Information Backbone (LW-SIBb), which is a central component of the European LifeWatch project.

Areas of Collaboration

Within the context of the ISA's Strategic Plan³ and High-level Action Plan⁴ for 2019-2023, adopted by the Assembly of ISA in 2018 and 2019 respectively, as well as the ISA's Action Plan in support of UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development⁵, adopted by the Assembly in December 2020, the ISA Secretariat and WoRMS agree to establish a framework of cooperation that uses the comparative advantage of the information systems (DeepData and WoRMS database) under each organization to:

- promote the use of biodiversity information for scientific research in the Area;
- minimize duplication of the efforts of the organizations towards enhancing the information systems;
- ensure the quality of deep-sea taxonomic information through a periodic scientific review (two-way comparison between DeepData and the taxonomic database World Register of Deep-Sea Species (WoRDSS⁶) based on WoRMS; thematic editors for WoRDSS and curated list of species published);
- facilitate the development of toolkits (e.g., WoRDSS, keys and guides) for enhanced use of taxonomic information generated from activities in the Area; and
- develop training and sensitization activities for providers and users of taxonomic data related to activities in the Area, with a view to standardizing the data, enhancing data exchange and sharing, and raising the awareness of deep-sea biodiversity.

² <http://www.marinespecies.org/about.php>

³ [ISBA/24/A/10](#)

⁴ [ISBA/25/A/15](#)

⁵ [ISBA/26/A/17](#)

⁶ <https://www.marinespecies.org/deepsea/>

ISA and WoRMS can develop and implement collaborative projects through a separate financial arrangement.

H.E. Michael W. Lodge

Secretary-General

**Secretariat of the
International Seabed
Authority**



Signature

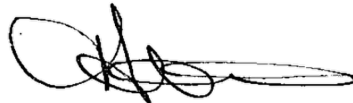
1 March 2022

Date

Dr. Tammy Horton

Chair of the Steering
Committee

**World Register of Marine
Species**



Signature

2 March 2022

Date

Jan Mees

General Director

**For the Flanders Marine
Institute (VLIZ)**



Signature

2 March 2022

Date