



Pacific Small Island Developing States Regional Training and Capacity Building Workshop on Deep Seabed Mining

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OPENING REMARKS

by

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Let me first say how delighted I am to be here today in Nuku'alofa, seeing so many friendly faces, and to have the opportunity to launch what I consider to be truly a flagship project for the Authority.

Before I expand on the joint ISA-UNDESA Abyssal Initiative and the objectives of this workshop, I wish to thank most warmly the Kingdom of Tonga for the fantastic welcome received since our arrival yesterday and for hosting us today.

I also thank colleagues from UNDESA. Great to be working together.

Thank members of LTC for attending.

Some of you may have observed that yesterday was International Day of Women and Girls in Science. ISA has a strong commitment to supporting participation by women in all aspects of deep sea science and I expect this will be reflected in the discussions over the next two days.

On my way over here from Jamaica, I stopped off in New York, where I had the opportunity to meet with P-SIDS missions to the United Nations as well as the UN Special Envoy, Mr Peter Thomson, to brief them on the work of ISA and the various initiatives we are supporting to advance implementation of SDG14.

I must say that I was very encouraged by the strong interest expressed in the Abyssal Initiative and I look forward to reporting back the results from this workshop in due course.

Pacific Island countries of course are at the forefront when it comes to the implementation of SDG14, which only reflects the importance given by the Pacific region to the need to conserve and sustainably use marine resources and the marine environment. This includes deep sea mineral resources, where the Pacific region has also been at the forefront when it comes to developing a sustainable deep sea minerals industry and promoting good governance of marine resources. One of the key objectives of the Abyssal Initiative is to ensure that, as deep sea mining moves from concept to reality, it does so in a way that contributes effectively to the Blue Economy of Pacific Island States.

Fundamental to this is the role played by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, our constitution for the ocean and a document which was shaped by this region. The Convention is not only overwhelmingly favourable to the political and economic interests of Pacific Island States, but also by creating the concepts of the EEZ and the Area, represents one of the biggest redistributions of natural capital in human history.

By creating the Authority to act as regulator and administrator of the deep seabed, with equal rights of membership for all States Parties, the Convention ensures that access to the deep sea is not limited to wealthy, technologically advanced States, but is also available to the smallest and least developed, and furthermore that the benefits from these resources can be shared fairly and justly.

As we all know, the very first of the P-SIDS to avail itself of the opportunities afforded under the Convention was Nauru, which in 2011 sponsored an exploration project in the Clarion Clipperton Zone.

Nauru's initiative was then followed by Kiribati, Cook Islands and Tonga, who sponsored similar applications in the CCZ. Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Cook Islands all have promising mineral exploration projects in national waters. Earlier marine mineral inventories were taken in other countries, including Marshall Islands, FSM and Kiribati and we will hear something about the history of these efforts today.

Let me pause here to note the invaluable role played by SPC through the SPC-EU Deep Sea Minerals Project between 2011 and 2016, for improving governance and regulatory mechanisms in Pacific Island countries, including working closely with ISA. It is unfortunate that this project had to come to

an end, particularly given the long-standing and deep involvement of Pacific Island countries in the development of the deep-sea mining regime over the years. However I am delighted that through the Abyssal Initiative we have a bright new opportunity to pursue fruitful collaboration between ISA, the countries in the region and the regional institutions.

So where are we today in terms of advancing deep sea mining in the Area?

As of today, twenty-nine contracts for exploration have been signed with ISA and two more applications are in the pipeline. Commercial interest is getting stronger as technology evolves and demand for minerals increases.

What is driving this interest? Mass electrification on a scale we have never seen before. It is increasingly apparent that to fight climate change and move away from an economy based on fossil fuel, we will need to source vast quantities of raw materials for renewable energy. US Senate hearing last week, highlighting that US is on 'red alert' on battery supply chain and supplies of Co, Cu and Ni. Critical shortages. Those who control the supply will have the power in the 21st century.

It is of critical importance that developing countries and in particular those which are already engaged in the Area are equipped with the necessary capacities to fulfil their governance responsibilities under the Convention as well as achieve their Blue Economy objectives. This is what the Abyssal Initiative is about

As Peter Thomson said in his address, we need to consider the whole of the ocean/climate nexus and take a broad view of the way in which we use planetary resources as a whole. This means that we cannot consider deep sea mining without also considering the adverse environmental impact of land-based mining.

Deep sea mining has its detractors. The ocean is in deep trouble, especially from land-based pollution, and there is a sort of instinctive reaction that to take anything from the ocean is a bad thing. We have seen several negative pieces in the media to this effect. Sadly, much of this is ill-informed and misguided.

Pacific Island countries, more than any others, understand very well that it is possible to use marine resources sustainably whilst also fulfilling their responsibilities to the marine environment. We need

to turn natural capital into human capital, to improve living conditions and to create a better world for future generations.

It is sometimes said by detractors that we are rushing into this venture too quickly and without proper consideration. In my view this is entirely misguided. The reality is that since the idea of exploiting the deep seabed was first raised by Ambassador Pardo of Malta in his famous speech in 1967 it has taken us 50 years to get to this point.

Building on the successes of the SPC-EU Deep Sea Minerals Project, the Abyssal Initiative will ensure that P-SIDS are able to comply with their national and international obligations as environmentally sustainable seabed activities progress; and that necessary governance structures and mechanisms are in place at the national level to achieve these objectives in an effective manner.

To this end, it is imperative also to address two critical issues. First, the level of participation of P-SIDS in activities undertaken in the Area. For instance, and despite the fact that some delegations make considerable efforts to attend the annual session of the Authority every year, it remains difficult for most of them to attend regularly and thus to participate fully in the decision-making process. However, it is vital that your voices are heard.

Another critical issue relates to capacity-building. As you know, the Authority attaches great importance to the development of the capacities of developing countries and indeed many individuals from P-SIDS have benefited from our efforts so far. However, more must and will be done. But before, as prerequisite, it is necessary that together we better understand your specific needs.

It is therefore in this spirit that we have come together for this workshop, and I trust that when we return, we will have a clear overview of the needs to be addressed to ensure that P-SIDS can fully benefit from the sustainable development of deep-seabed mineral resources.

I wish you a dynamic and productive workshop.

Thank you.