



FIJI STATEMENT AT THE 20TH COMMEMORATION OF THE ISA
20TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY
KINGSTON, JAMAICA, 22 JULY 2014

Mr. President,

Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guest Speakers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Fiji is very pleased to be participating this commemorative event on the 20th anniversary of the International Seabed Authority. We fully align with the earlier statements made by the Asia-Pacific Group and by the distinguished Ambassador of the Kingdom of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific SIDS.

Mr President,

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was a monumental achievement for oceans governance. Permit us to recall that thirty-two years ago on 10 December 1982, Fiji was the first State to ratify the Convention. We well remember how our country saw this at the time as a signal that a just and equitable governance system for oceans could be achieved, one that took into account the interests and needs of mankind as a whole. We have not been disappointed.

We believe that the Convention is central to the noble goals of the UN Charter. It provides a legal order for nearly three quarters of the earth's surface, addressing sustainable use of natural resources, peace and security, maritime delimitations, navigation, environmental conservation, scientific research and capacity

building, and the settlement of international marine disputes in a balanced and integrated manner. It has become embedded in the affairs of nations and the health of our planet, providing a guiding example to other areas of law.

Today, we pay particular tribute to the International Seabed Authority, one of the three important institutions established by the UNCLOS. In doing so, we acknowledge the contributions of personalities synonymous with the Convention and its continuing evolution, such as Ambassador Arvid Pardo of Malta. We pay special tribute to the work of one of Fiji's most distinguished sons, Ambassador Satya Nandan, who played a key role in the codification and development of the modern law of the sea. We are particularly proud that he served as the first Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority.

Mr President,

At this commemorative event, the Fiji delegation wishes to thank the Government of Jamaica, as the host country of the International Seabed Authority, for its unwavering support in ensuring a permanent home for the Authority. We also take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Odunton, and his dedicated staff, for their steadfast commitment to the interests of this organization.

It is a source of great satisfaction that the International Seabed Authority is now functioning more actively than ever. It is the only institution through which States Parties can organize and control activities - particularly, the exploration and exploitation of seabed mineral resources while taking due care of the environment - in the Area beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. As we all know, those resources are under the Convention, the "common heritage of mankind", and we have faith that the Authority will always strive to that end.

Mr President,

The increasing demand for metals has led to a resurgence of interest in deep-sea minerals. The retrieval of minerals from deep-sea deposits in water depths greater than 300m will inevitably see the human footprint extend onto previously untouched and the largely unknown ecosystems. We therefore stress, the need for capacity building and adequate scientific research, on the environmental management of the seabed of the Area. The importance of these environmental responsibilities must always be central to the Authority's deliberations.

Mr President,

We have keenly noted the fact that the Authority has for the past two decades taken all its decisions on substantive matters by consensus, as a result of the cooperative and harmonious spirit of its membership. Progress reached to date has

been gratifying and gives us cause for optimism in dealing with the tasks ahead. The same spirit of cooperation will be required of the members of the Authority as we address the challenge of calibrating the exploitation regulations for deep seabed minerals pursuant to Article 145 of the Convention.

Mr President,

We have stated on numerous occasions just how important the work of this Authority is to the small island developing States of the Pacific. When one considers that the collective thread of exclusive economic zones of the Pacific SIDS amounts to more than 30 million square kilometers part of which directly adjoins to the all-important Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ), it is obvious why we entrust so much upon the work of the ISA.

Mr President,

The principles of sustainability, precaution, decisions informed by good science, to name a few, coupled with the Advisory Opinion delivered on 1 February 2011 by the Seabed Disputes Chamber, provide a solid platform from which to tackle the challenges ahead. In doing so, we emphasize again that the Authority has an overarching duty as the custodian of the "common heritage of mankind" to always exercise "duty of care" for our oceans ecosystems, and for future generations.

I thank you.

