



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES **United Nations Member States**

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Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Statement on the Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the International Seabed Authority

Kingston, 22nd July 2014

“Check against delivery”

Mr. President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the 9 Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) that are historically represented at the ISA's 20th Session for the first time together, namely, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country Tonga. We also stand together and associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, Ambassador Peter Thomson on behalf of the Asia Pacific Group.

Mr. President,

The oceans and seas has been a source of life since the dawn of humankind. As it is our common history, the oceans and seas and all contained therein are also our common future – indeed our common heritage

For the PSIDS, our lives, our cultures, our identities are intrinsically intertwined with the oceans. Our livelihood has been sustained for centuries through the oceans primarily through fisheries. This is the premise as to why all PSIDS are state parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in doing so, have committed themselves to that to which the UNCLOS represents and stands for.

Mr President,

As we celebrate today the Twentieth Anniversary of the International Seabed Authority, we are reminded that the UNCLOS, as a historic legal framework, catalysed the governance of the vast maritime expanses and their living and non-living resources that are so fundamental to humanity. It has enabled many of us today in the global community, including PSIDS, to domesticate it in our national laws as a central pillar and we look up to it to guide the management and sustainable use of the oceans and seas, and through the International Seabed Authority, the management, sustainable use, and conservation of the seabed and the subsoil thereof in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Convention strengthens our potential and has made sense of our ancestral bond with the maritime environment, which long before recognized this

intrinsic linkage. But further added sense to the rights of Small Island Developing States to the seabed and subsoil by working through the ISA together with fellow member states of this august institution. It is not surprising therefore that all the PSIDS are parties to the Convention of the Law of the Sea, one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations. It is also a remarkable coincidence that UNCLOS' Twentieth Anniversary of its entry into force is at a time that the United Nations has declared 2014, as the first-ever International Year for Small Island Developing States.

Mr. President,

With the obvious limitations of PSIDS sustainable development, in terms of land-based resources, it is natural that PSIDS would again look to the oceans and further to the seabed in its critical role for their development aspirations. The exploration and ultimate exploitation of the natural resources gifted to mankind as a common heritage, or within our collective national jurisdictions, must of course be balanced with the equally important need for environmental protection and conservation. The state of the marine environment is already degrading at an alarming rate. So as we look forward to another 20 years of work as state members of the ISA, and beyond, we must be always cognizant of the implications of uncovering nature's riches on and within the seabed as gifted to us all by God, but also offering the opportunity to nature to also recover and regenerate so that our symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship with nature is sustained for the future. And in this moment when we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the of the ISA, it is a worthy time to rededicate ourselves to the goals UNCLOS sets for us -- the equitable and efficient utilization of marine resources (both living and non-living), the conservation of their living resources, and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment. Indeed, our sustainable development is intimately premised upon the appropriate management approaches and conservation measures of the ocean and seas and the natural resources contained within it, and the seabed and subsoil over which those oceans covers.

Mr. President,

As we engage on the preparations for the upcoming Third International Conference for Small Island Developing States in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, we hope that the ISA may further its partnership with SIDS in a more genuine and durable way so that the PSIDS may find further ways and means to contribute to the effective, efficient, and economical functioning of the ISA. We understand that an invitation to the ISA has been presented to the Secretary-General from the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government of the Independent State of Samoa for the ISA to attend the Conference. We hope to see you there in September.

This SIDS Conference theme of “genuine and durable partnership” is particularly relevant in the context of explorations and exploitation management and sustainable use of the seabed and the subsoil thereof: achieving our goal of sustainable development in this regard and the objectives set by the Convention therefore requires our collective participation and cooperation for our mutual benefit for now and the generations to come. We are happy to remind this august Assembly of the outcome document of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals which concluded its work last Friday, 19th in New York. The proposed SDGs feature a proposed goal to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. The goal calls for, as one of its means of implementation, the full implementation of international law, as reflected in UNCLOS for states parties to it, including, where applicable, existing regional and international regimes for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by their parties. The goal therefore considers and indeed includes the work of the ISA and the states parties to it.

Mr. President,

At this Anniversary of the second decade of the creation of the ISA, we are heartened that the ISA has facilitated international cooperation and indeed promoted both the management of exploration and exploitation of the seabed bed processes through the appropriate consideration of the environment and the need to care for it at the same time. There of course is much room for improvement through the appropriate review of current procedures through possible terms of reference that may be placed before members in due course as a way forward. PSIDS certainly looks to working with others in this regard soon and on all other related matters as we move into another 20 years and beyond.

We therefore further urge the international community to consolidate the gains we have worked together to achieve so that the spirit and the letter of the constitution of the ocean and seas can effectively and sustainably deliver to humanity the manifold benefits that the seabed and its subsoil provides.

Last and not least Mr. President, what remains to be said is, Happy 20th Birthday, ISA.

Thank you.