

International Seabed Authority: 24th session of the Assembly

Tuesday 24 July 2018

Agenda item 7: Report of the Secretary-General

*Statement of Pacific Islands Forum members present delivered  
by the Head of Nauru Delegation, Graham Leung*

Thank you, President.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum members present, namely Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu and my own delegation, Nauru.

At the outset let me, on behalf of our members present, congratulate the Secretary-General for his annual report to the Assembly pursuant to article 166 of UNCLOS, and allow us to proffer the following remarks in that regard.

Mr. President,

The health of the oceans is of vital importance to Pacific Islands Forum members, given the cultural significance of the Pacific Ocean to our countries and the reliance we place on it for food security, transport, communications and sustainable economies. We believe that this must always be an underlying factor in balancing any consideration for continued exploration and before exploitation commences.

Mr. President,

We thank the Legal and Technical Commission and the Authority Secretariat for their work over the past year. We are closely following the development of the exploitation regulations. In pursuing the agreed balance between the need to conserve and replenish the environment in any decision to be taken before exploitation commences, we highlight the need to take into account the potential for adverse socio-economic impacts of future mining activities, for example on fisheries, and other migratory mammals such as whales, which are an important element of tourism for many of the Pacific island countries. Further consideration will need to be given to the concept of reasonable regard and other uses of the marine environment. The particular circumstances and potential impact on small island developing States should also be considered, including as sponsoring States and in relation to the discussion of equitable benefit sharing and the common heritage of mankind. We stress that the full package to allow for exploitation includes the development of not just the regulations, but also the accompanying guidelines and standards, which must be consistent with UNCLOS. We highlight the importance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) and its related interlinked Sustainable Development Goals as an internationally endorsed document for consideration as a guide and tool in this regard.

Mr. President,

We are pleased that the workshop to review the status of the implementation of the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone will take place later this year. With the development of the regional environmental management plan for the cobalt crust areas of the North West Pacific, we stress the need to ensure the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands are adequately consulted, given the potential for these adjacent coastal States to be directly impacted by any activities in this area. It is also important for States and other stakeholders to be given sufficient notice of any workshops and training opportunities, to ensure the broadest possible participation. We also wish to congratulate the Authority on its work towards implementing its voluntary commitments made at the United Nations Ocean Conference in 2017, in particular the partnership with UN-DESA on the abyssal initiative for Blue Growth to advance SDG14 for the promotion of socioeconomic benefits for developing countries such as our 14 small island developing States in the Pacific region. We therefore support and welcome the planned workshop in this regard scheduled to be held in the Kingdom of Tonga in November 2018, and urge the Authority and UN-DESA to ensure appropriate arrangements are made to have this important and timely workshop completed as planned.

Mr. President,

We welcome the development of the draft strategic plan for the Authority, including the recognition that the Authority's work contributes to efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The work we undertake here does not take place in a vacuum and the broader picture of Agenda 2030 and other relevant processes should also be kept in mind. Our members will speak to this important issue individually when the item comes before the Assembly later this week.

Mr. President,

We are conscious of the common issues being considered here at the Authority and in the negotiations of the new UNCLOS implementing agreement on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. This includes issues such as environmental impact assessments and the need to take into account the potential impact on and interests of adjacent coastal States. We encourage delegations to keep in mind the possible linkages between these two processes, given our common interest in conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Finally Mr. President, we look forward to welcoming the Secretary-General at the 49th Pacific Islands Forum meeting of our Leaders in Nauru this September.

Thank you.