



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
HON MARK BROWN  
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

2024 SIDS Conference

International Seabed Authority Side Event  
“Leveraging SIDS knowledge, technology, innovation and capacity to  
advance the deep-sea research for the benefit of humanity”

Prime Minister Mark Brown’s Keynote address

**St. John’s Antigua and Barbuda | Monday 27 May 2024  
16:00-17:30 (Room 10)**

Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,  
Kia Orana and warm Pacific greetings to you all.

It is my pleasure to give a keynote address at this side event on leveraging SIDS knowledge, technology, innovation and capacity to advance the deep-sea research for the benefit of humanity.

As a SIDS that is also a Large Ocean State, a Member of the ISA and a Sponsoring State, the Cook Islands are also pleased to co-organize this side event.

For us, data and knowledge is more valuable than the resource itself. This is because it is only with knowledge and understanding that we can make sound decisions to unlock our Blue Economy and improve our lives and those of our children. Knowledge empowers us all.

As such, it is important to continue identifying and prioritising avenues for ocean knowledge and scientific advancement at national, regional and global levels.



I want to thank the Secretary General Michael Lodge and the International Seabed Authority for hosting this event, and for leading the global 'call to action for ensuring the stewardship of the internal seabed area and its resources for the benefit of all humanity through deep-sea science, technology, and innovation.

Last year in September 2023, during the SDG Summit held at the UN Headquarters in New York, I joined the ISA, together with other countries to launch this global Call to Action.

I note that this year, the ISA celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. And most, if not all its work so far has been and continues to be entirely dedicated to advancing science and global knowledge of the deep-sea for the benefit of us all.

The ISA stands today as a cornerstone of science and evidence-based governance of the global commons and the prerequisite for the sustainable use of ocean resources as well as the protection of the marine environment.



In the Pacific region, we have a profound cultural drive to inform our people. From professionals to university students to school age children and to their parents and family and our grassroots communities.

It is essential that we bring our people along on this journey and ensure that our newfound knowledge is accessible to all. As we say in the Cook Islands: "No one in the tribe is to be left out. No one left behind".

Complementary to the ISA's global deep-sea research agenda is the endorsement by Pacific Island Forum leaders last year, on the establishment of a regional Pacific Center of Excellence in Deep Ocean Science – or PCEDOS as we call it.

This collaborative center will work with all interested stakeholders to further leverage knowledge, technology, innovation and capacity development.



At the national level, the Cook Islands, like the ISA and many other countries, are amidst an unprecedented deluge of data. Modern exploration platforms and modern sensor suites deliver data in unparalleled volumes and widely different formats and contexts.

But our questions often remain the same. The weight of our decisions never seem to lessen. Effective leveraging of knowledge, technology, innovation and capacity in deep-sea research has never been more important.

The Cook Islands have been privileged to contribute to and receive capacity development through the ISA's MSR Action plan. We have developed and enhanced our own deep-sea knowledge through active collaboration with the ISA.

We are proud of our very own Cook Islands scientist Rima Browne, who was last year's winner of the ISA Secretary-General's Award for excellence in deep-sea research – for her work on creating the Cook Islands first seabed map based on international data.

This is the type of new knowledge led by our people that I am talking about. These success stories can only be achieved if all of us agree to work together. The ISA is an excellent platform to facilitate this at the global level as it brings together governments, scientific institutions, academia, contractors, and the public.



I cannot emphasise enough the importance of collaboration internationally, regionally, and nationally to build a robust knowledge base for the benefit of humanity.

Compiling and sharing information effectively is a crucial and complex process. With cooperation in gathering, disseminating and translating information we can turn it into

actionable knowledge necessary in achieving a prosperous and well-informed global community.

The Cook Islands was one of the first to sign the Global Call to action and I support the efforts of the Secretary-General to continue rallying more stakeholders in supporting this global initiative. I invite you all to join to further maximize and amplify our collective actions for the benefit of all.

Thank you.