

Item 10: Eighth Meeting of the Informal Working Group on the Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment

Joint Statement delivered by Cook Islands on behalf of Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, the Kingdom of Tonga and Tuvalu.

24 July 2024

Bula Madam Facilitator. If I can seek your indulgence, please allow my delegation to take the floor to make a general statement during this eighth meeting of the informal working group on the Protection and Presevation of the Marine Environment.

We are honoured to deliver this joint statement on behalf of: Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, the Kingdom of Tonga and Tuvalu.

Firstly, we acknowledge you Madam Facilitator for your exemplary leadership over the Informal Working Group on the protection and preservation of the marine environment. We are proud, to see a Pacific Islander leading this important work.

As Pacific Islands, our connection to the Ocean is deeply rooted in our identity, our traditions, our practices, and our cultures. It has and continues to be a source of sustenance to past and present generations, and it will be for our future generations to come.

We underscore the need for the combined and distinct voices of the Pacific to be heard in the deliberations of the Authority on the conservation and sustainable use of the international seabed Area.

Madam Facilitator,

In 2022, our Pacific leaders endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent - our vision for collective action developed by our peoples, for our peoples.

Last year, at the 52nd Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, our Pacific Leaders:

Agreed to greater regional dialogue and cooperation on Deep Sea Minerals management.

Acknowledged the significant interest in deep sea minerals among specific Members and reaffirmed our collective commitment to the health and resilience of the Blue Pacific Continent.

Recognised and respected the diversity of positions amongst Members on deep sea minerals and sovereign decision-making.

Finally, our Pacific Leaders endorsed the convening of a Pacific Islands Forum Talanoa Dialogue this year to facilitate open and inclusive discussion on deep sea minerals.

The fabric of our Pacific community is woven through mutual respect, shared advocacy, and collective action. Whilst we may have differing positions, we are all united in our commitment to ensure the protection and preservation of the ocean and the marine environment and upholding our obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Madam Facilitator,

We encourage member States and all stakeholders to support efforts to increase investment in marine scientific research and technology for the effective management and deeper understanding of the Area and its resources, including through capacity development programmes for the benefit of developing States.

We further note that last year, our Leaders endorsed the establishment of a Pacific Centre of Excellence on Deep Ocean Science, a regional initiative intended to further our deep ocean knowledge and understanding.

Madam Facilitator,

We reaffirm our collective commitment towards a strong and comprehensive and fit for purpose regulatory framework to be put in place, based on best available scientific information and, where available, relevant traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, that ensures the effective protection of the marine environment before any exploitation of seabed minerals can occur, in line with the precautionary principle and precautionary approach.

These are fundamental in ensuring a healthy and resilient Ocean for present and future generations.

I thank you Madam Facilitator.