

#12 Te Ipukarea Society Opening Statement

Mr. President,

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address the meeting and I acknowledge the presence of all our leaders and delegations in the room.

Te Ipukarea Society is a non government organisation based in the Cook Islands, and we are honoured that our delegation also includes our traditional voyaging Vaka family from Micronesia and Hawaii.

We are here to let you know that there is a strong opposition from many Pacific islanders to seabed mining of our Moana Nui o Kiva, our ocean, our home.

Many Pacific people are not being well informed on the environmental, social, economical and cultural risks associated with this industry's race to the bottom. This goes against the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

Making decisions to start this potentially devastating activity, based on the 'best science available' NOW or in the near future is not good enough.

Much more research is needed which must be comprehensive, and inclusive of indigenous science. Indigenous science has the longest baseline of scientific research that incorporates observations, data and analysis taken place over thousands of years, and incorporates cultural perspectives. In addition, more independent research must be conducted, not just research by mining companies.

This research needs to be progressed against a backdrop of a moratorium on any commercial mining of deep seabed minerals, until such a time as an informed decision can be made on whether to mine, or not.

Until we have enough science to make an informed decision, we fully support the call by a number of member states for the development of a General Policy on the protection of the marine environment, and encourage all member states genuinely concerned about the health of our ocean to engage in the discussion on this agenda item.

Mr president if I can conclude on, the clock is ticking for the ocean.