

Concerning the interim Article 154 review: Commonwealth Secretariat statement to the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA)

Jeff Ardron, 20 July 2016

Mr President and distinguished delegates,

The Commonwealth Secretariat wishes to thank the Review Committee and the consultants for their considerable efforts to date, and for providing the interim results in a timely manner. We wish to thank the many delegations for their thoughtful interventions heard so far, and we align ourselves with those from Bangladesh, Fiji, Australia, Singapore, UK, India, and Tonga.¹ Many of the issues raised in the interim Art. 154 review are not new, but as several interventions have made clear, they may not be widely known or in some cases, universally seen to be an issue. In short, different viewpoints have circulated in different circles. Hence this review has provided the valuable opportunity to assemble these various perspectives together into one document, accessible to the Assembly as well as the broader public. We welcome the frankness of the report, and the transparency of this discussion so far. As many delegations have already said, the review process in the coming year will need to first ensure that all States Parties and stakeholders have been given ample opportunity to submit their comments on the interim report; and secondly to lay out the steps necessary to consider the merits of each point, and follow-through with recommendations as necessary. Being the first review in 20 years, there are indeed a wide range of issues and recommendations, as has been pointed out already. It will be a challenge to address these issues, and hence a schedule of work is indeed a good suggestion that has been put forward. That said, there is no doubt that some issues or perspectives were missed, or where language could be improved. However, as the saying goes, please do not let “perfect be the enemy of the good.” In the view of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Division of Oceans and Natural Resources, this interim product is indeed a *good* starting point. While not perfect, we suggest that it forms a solid basis for moving forward on the ISA’s first-ever review. We would be pleased to comment upon it, and we look forward to the final results.

Thank you.

Thank you.

¹ Commonwealth countries listed in the order that they spoke. Some may have been missed since the time this text was submitted, prior to our intervention.