

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Mahe ‘U. S. Tupouniua,  
Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Head of Delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga  
To the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Seabed Authority  
Under Agenda Item 9: Consideration and Adoption of the strategic plan  
For the Authority for the 5-year period 2019 – 2023**

**Kingston, Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

*Check Against Delivery*

**Mr. President,**

I wish to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report as contained in ISBA/24/A/4 and the draft strategic plan provided in accordance with the request made by the Assembly at its 23<sup>rd</sup> Session in accordance with the Article 154 Review. We commend the Secretary-General for the inclusive and transparent manner in which the consultations on the draft strategic plan were conducted, in particular the invitation for submission from members and stakeholders which Tonga had the opportunity to participate in.

Allow me to make a few comments on the current draft as it stands.

**Mr. President,**

As we have highlighted previously, the process for the development of rules, regulations, or guidelines for an equitable-sharing criteria, is crucial for the operationalization of the common heritage of mankind pursuant to Article 140 of the Convention. This priority was reflected and captured in the initial strategic plan under a stand-alone strategic direction 7 and was entitled “Developing equitable sharing criteria”. We had welcomed this strategic direction as a seminal text to ensure the Authority places priority in its work on the benefit for mankind as a whole in particular the developing states like my own, including nations that have not attained full independence or in a self-governing status, as required under Article 40.

We note with concern that this has been removed in the current draft and merged into Strategic Direction 2, thereby, in our view, lessening its status as a priority. Having a stand-alone strategic direction dedicated to the development of the criteria is vital in ensuring the appropriate actions are taken by the relevant organs of the Authority in a transparent and inclusive manner. We therefore urge that Strategic Direction 7 in its previous form be reinstated.

**Mr. President,**

In the same vein we wish to reiterate an important issue that we had raised in Council last week and that is the timely consideration for the establishment of the Economic Planning Commission in its own right. As the Authority, members, and stakeholders, move towards the possibility for exploitation and the ongoing discussion on the operationalization of the common heritage of mankind, equitable sharing and an appropriate financial mechanism, these issues speak directly to the importance of the Commission which may provide the appropriate advice on such matters to the Council and ultimately to this supreme organ for finalization. Consideration of Article 164 and its related articles in the Convention should be factored into the strategic plan of the Authority to ensure its proper functioning premised upon efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. We therefore wish to highlight the importance of factoring in the evolution of relevant organs under Strategic Directions 1 and 2.

**Mr. President,**

We welcome OP 3 of the Draft decision of the Council for the Secretary-General to prepare a high-level action plan which would include key performance indicators and a list of outputs for the next five years that would take into account available financial and human resources, for consideration by the Assembly at its 25<sup>th</sup> session. In doing so, it will provide greater certainty by providing specific means for Parties to track the Authority's activities. Ideally, we would have preferred that the Strategic Plan be adopted together with this action plan, we understand that at this point in time it may not be possible which is unfortunate. Nevertheless, we urge the Secretary-General to work on this as a matter of priority.

**Mr. President,**

Tonga had proposed the incorporation of provisions toward a monitoring and mid-term review mechanism in the strategic plan to ensure that we attain the outputs and plans we would have laid out. We would have welcomed its inclusion in the latest iteration of the strategic plan given the importance of monitoring and review of any work plan as an essential element of good management. We note however that it is mentioned in the Secretary-General's appended draft decision, in addition to the implementation mechanisms to put into effect the monitoring, evaluating, as well as learning.

**Mr. President,**

These are our comments at this point and I thank you.