

Agenda item 8 – Status of national legislation relating to deep seabed mining and related matters

COOK ISLANDS STATEMENT

Greetings to the President and distinguished Members of the Council.

I would like to join the previous Speakers in acknowledging your appointment and thank you for your leadership of the Council in this important session.

The Cook Islands appreciates the opportunity as a Member State to update the Council on its progress with its national legislation and to support and acknowledge the excellent on-going work of the Council, as an essential organ of the International Seabed Authority. We are encouraged by the good progress of the Council in the first Part of this 25th session¹ on many items of work, in particular the Draft ISA Exploitation Regulations, whilst also acknowledging the work ahead for the respective bodies in addressing the numerous and varied challenges of developing a rigorous fair and transparent regime.

National legislation – new Seabed Minerals Act 2019

The Cook Islands would like to take the opportunity to share with distinguished representatives here at the ISA that on 13 June 2019, our national Parliament passed the Seabed Minerals Act 2019, replacing the previous 2009 Act of the same name.

This new legislation provides the platform for the modernization of our regulatory framework, incorporating key environmental management and financial principles. It brings our laws up to date with international best practice, reflecting the Cook Islands commitment to the responsible and progressive development of our seabed minerals resources.

Of particular note is Part 8 of the Act, concerning seabed activities in the Area. Part 8 fulfils the Cook Islands obligations and responsibilities as a Sponsoring State under Part XI of the Convention. It provides the Cook Islands with the necessary national framework and functions in order to assist the ISA with regulating the activities of its sponsored party in the Area.

The new Act was drafted with the ISA standards in mind and with the valued assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat and other expert external advisors. It was consulted upon widely both nationally and international, and received positive support from our local communities and stakeholders.

This legislation has been provided to the ISA and is available on-line at Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority website: <https://www.seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck/>.

As the Cook Islands continues its work in building its national regulatory and environmental framework for seabed minerals activities, it will continue to support the ISA in the development and of best standards and practice.

Oceans Governance – Marae Moana (Our National Marine Park)

We'd also like to take this opportunity to highlight another important and relatively new piece of legislation complementary to our seabed minerals legislation, and that is the Cook Islands Marae Moana

¹ Twenty-fifth Annual Session of the International Seabed Authority (First Part): 25 February – 1 March 2019

Act, 2017. “Marae Moana” translates to “Our Sacred Ocean”. The “Marae Moana” essentially establishes a whole of domain marine management framework, through the development of a zoned, multi-use ocean space, where conservation is priority, while at the same time providing for the sustainable utilization of our marine resources. The Marae Moana covers our entire EEZ of almost 2 million km², and covers our valuable fish stocks and an estimated 12 billion tons of Manganese Nodules. The Marae Moana Act brings together the various ocean users and stakeholders, and inter alia, appropriately scales up marine spatial planning to encompass our entire EEZ.

In closing, we wish to extend our best wishes to the ISA Secretary- General and all the Staff and Members of the ISA on the occasion of the 25th Birthday of the ISA this year, and the Cook Islands looks forward to being a part of the productive and constructive future of the Authority.

Thank You.