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Intervention on Agenda Item 11: Draft Regulations for Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area

Madam President,

Regional Environment Management Plans

Fiji strongly supports the development of Regional Environment Management Plans (REMPs). As we reported in Assembly last year, Fiji acknowledges the Council for the adoption of the environmental management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in 2012 however we note more work is needed for the development of REMPs and we call for more capacity building focused on the proper establishment, management and implementation of REMPs to be in parallel with the draft regulations before exploitation can begin.

This position was most recently echoed in the outcome statement of a workshop for PSIDS convened in Tonga two weeks ago and sponsored by the ISA and UNDESA SIDS Unit.

Fiji acknowledges the large difference in scale between the area that will be selected by a contractor for an exploitation contract compared with that of a regional management plan. But clearly the two are linked. The environmental impact assessment required by a contractor that must accompany an exploitation application needs to be considered against the bigger scale regional management plan. As such Fiji suggests the regional plans must be in place prior to applications being received and not prior to application approval. This will ensure complementarity and of course enable a determination of any issues that are mandatory compared with recommendatory.

Fiji fully supports the engagement of the Pacific Small Island Developing States in the review of the CCZ nodule area REMP given the proximity of the western boundary of the CCZ with the eastern boundary of the EEZ of Kiribati and connectivity to other PSIDS. We also reaffirm and strongly support the engagement of our neighbours in the North Pacific with the development of the REMP for the cobalt crust areas adjacent to their EEZs.

In closing Fiji expresses its appreciation to the SG for increasing the number of environmental staffing of the Secretariat, and the securing the funding in the current biennium to enable this critical work on the REMPs to take place and be completed over the next two years.

I thank you.