



Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

25th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority Agenda item 9: Annual Report of the Secretary-General

Statement by: H.E. Ambassador Jane J. Chigiya, Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia to the United Nations, Head of Delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia to the 25th Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority

Kingston, Jamaica, 23 July 2019

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Thank you, Madame President.

My delegation congratulates you and your Bureau on your appointments to lead our work this session. You have our support.

Madame President,

My delegation welcomes the Annual Report of the Secretary-General. It is clear from the Annual Report that the Authority is entering a critical phase of its work, one that moves it closer to finalizing the Mining Code and launching a regime for the exploitation of the resources of the Area. It is important, then, that the Authority gets this process right. The Area and its resources are the common heritage of mankind. This means that we have a special responsibility to not only share benefits from the exploitation of those resources in an equitable manner, but to also protect the marine environment of the Area from which those resources are exploited. Achieving the proper balance between these two elements of the common heritage of mankind will determine whether the Authority will properly discharge its mandate under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its 1994 Agreement.

In this connection, Madame President, my delegation welcomes the progress over the last year on work on the draft exploitation regulations. However, we also note that much work remains to be done on the draft regulations. We reiterate the many interventions from the 25th session of the Council that it is more important to get the substance of the draft regulations right than to meet an arbitrary, self-imposed deadline. The Council was unable to complete a first reading of the draft regulations last week, and there remains a significant amount of work to be done on gaps in the draft regulations as well as on Standards and Guidelines and the development of regional environmental management plans. It is not clear to my delegation whether this work can be completed by July 2020 in a manner that balances all relevant interests, including those of the environment. We stress care and caution in the work of the Authority going forward.

Madame President,

My delegation welcomes the convening of future workshops to develop regional environmental management plans. We note that a workshop is scheduled for February 2020 in the Republic of Korea to focus on the cobalt-crust area of the north-west Pacific. We also note that the Council approved last week an application for the exploration of polymetallic nodules in the western Pacific. As there is much work being done in parts of the Area that are adjacent to the Exclusive Economic Zones of Micronesia and other coastal States in the Pacific, it is imperative that applicants from those States are given strong consideration to be participants in the workshop in February 2020, in light of the inter-connectivity of marine ecosystems of the Area and those within the limits of national jurisdictions of those States, as well as in light of the demonstrated presence of cobalt-rich areas within the Exclusive Economic Zones of several of those States, including Micronesia. We also underscore the views expressed in the Council last week and earlier this week in the Assembly, including by the distinguished representative of Canada, regarding the participation of representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities with relevant traditional knowledge in workshops to develop regional environmental management plans as well as in all other consultations with respect to activities in the Area. We encourage the secretariat to conduct necessary outreach in that regard.

Madame President,

To conclude, my delegation notes that paragraph 57 of the Annual Report identifies a number of States that have submitted information on national laws, regulations, and administrative measures of relevance to the work of the Authority, including Micronesia. Micronesia submitted our National Seabed Resources Act this past April. We are in the process of promulgating regulations to implement the Act, which has provisions regulating Micronesia's sponsorship of contractors in the Area. In the meantime, we are participating actively in the work of the Authority to ensure complementarity between the Mining Code and other activities of the Authority on the one hand, and our national Act and related activities on the other hand. We look forward to more fruitful engagements in this regard.

Thank you, Madame President.