



Council

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Statement to the Council by the delegation of Fiji

Mr. President,

Following on from informal consultations with many of this body's members, the Fiji delegation has chosen this moment in the seventeenth session to make a proposal to the Council. As signalled in our words to the Council last week, a new phase in the life of the International Seabed Authority is steadily approaching. That new phase is the reality of deep-sea mining and the prescribed role the Authority will have in organizing and monitoring these activities where they pertain to the Area.

Since its establishment in 1994, the Authority has achieved some great milestones. It has cemented its place in the world as the central authority for organization and control of the Area. It has diligently established the regulations for exploration for both polymetallic nodules and polymetallic sulphides, and is now on the doorstep of approving the regulations for cobalt-rich crusts. As of this week, it has approved entry into a dozen contracts for exploration for deep-sea minerals in the Area, two of which are being issued to contractors who will prospect in areas reserved for developing countries.

All these milestones have been achieved because of the foresight and fortitude of those who took us into, and through, the establishment phase of the Authority's life: in the Secretariat, the Legal and Technical Commission, and here in this Council. Once again, we express our admiration and gratitude to all concerned.

It is with these solid achievements in mind and in the knowledge of the foreseeable commencement of deep-sea mining that it has now become a matter of timeliness and prudence for the Council to accept that the days are upon us when work on the sea-bed mining code should begin.

There is of course much work we will have to do before we can frame the first sentence of the mining code. And before we launch ourselves into the full weight of that historic task, there is much the Secretariat and the Legal and Technical Commission can do to prepare themselves and our Council for the work of producing the mining code.

It is with a progressive eye towards this next phase in the Authority's life that we propose that the Council decide today to request the Secretariat to turn its attention to preparations for formulating the sea-bed mining code. The results of such attention will obviously be preparatory in nature, but by giving it notice of our request before the Council completes its meeting today, we are confident it will be in a position, when the Council meets again in 2012, to advise us on first steps towards the formulation of the mining code.

In summary, Mr. President, it is proposed that you include in the Council report that it is the wish of this Council that preparations begin for the formulation of the regulations for mining of deep-sea minerals in the Area, and that the Secretariat be requested to prepare a strategic workplan to this effect for consideration by the Authority at its eighteenth session.

I thank you.
