

International Seabed Authority: 25th session of the Assembly

Tuesday 23 July 2019

Agenda item 9: Report of the Secretary-General

Statement of Pacific Islands Forum members present by Ambassador Graham Leung of Nauru

Thank you, President.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum members present, namely Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Tonga, Tuvalu and my own delegation, Nauru.

At the outset let me, on behalf of our members present, congratulate the Secretary-General for his annual report to the Assembly.

Madam President,

Our members rely on a healthy ocean. The Pacific Ocean is vital to our cultures, our food security, our economies, and our transport and communications. Ensuring its continued health and productivity is our starting point for any consideration of activities in the ocean, including exploration and exploitation of mineral resources.

We thank the Legal and Technical Commission and the Authority Secretariat for their work over the past year. Our members continue to closely follow and participate in the development of the exploitation regulations.

We in our region have a long history of sustainable management of ocean resources, based on traditional knowledge, science, innovation, and cooperation. We rely on exploitation of the ocean, but in doing so, we know that we must also conserve and replenish it. The exploitation regulations and accompanying standards and guidelines must maintain this balance. We will continue to engage in their development and will draw on our own significant experience of ocean management in this regard.

Development of the concept of reasonable regard and consideration of other uses of the marine environment will be vital. This is not a theoretical exercise for us. Ensuring that regulations, standards, and guidelines are of the highest quality, is one way in which we will safeguard against risks to other uses of the ocean, including fisheries, shipping and tourism.

We were pleased to welcome the Secretary-General of the ISA to Nauru in September last year, during the forty-ninth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting. His presence at the meeting was valued by our members, particularly at a time of increasing interest in deep-sea mining and ocean governance. At that meeting, Pacific Island Forum Leaders endorsed

the Boe Declaration, which reaffirmed the region's stewardship of the Blue Pacific, and also affirmed an expanded concept of security to include non-traditional issues, including environmental and resource security. These regional frameworks, alongside others such as the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, will guide how our members engage in the ISA and other ocean-related processes.

The work we undertake here is not occurring in a vacuum. The 2030 Agenda, and particularly SDG 14 must guide and inform our deliberations. We recall in particular the 2017 UN Ocean Conference which was co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden, and which mobilised many commitments for ocean action. We look forward to the second UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon in 2020, to be co-hosted by Portugal and Kenya, and we encourage the Authority to actively engage in this Conference, as it did during the first. We are also soon to enter the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The Authority has an important role to play in ocean science and we hope to see it play an active role in the decade.

Finally Madam President, we look forward to joining all delegations in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Authority this week. We know that the next 25 years of the Authority will be very different to the last 25 years. It is up to us to make the right decisions now, to ensure that we have good reason to continue celebrating in 25 years' time.

Thank you.