

## **TONGA DELEGATION 25<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**

**Madam President,**

The Kingdom of Tonga is indeed honored to be present here, in Kingston, to celebrate with members and observers, including the contractors, the 25th Commemorative Session of the International Seabed Authority.

**Madam President,**

The past 25 years were not without its challenges and we are slightly better navigators of the Area as a result thereof, for smooth seas do not make skilled explorers. Our experiences thus far have given us information to better plot our journey moving forward. As we look ahead, two things are crucial in our work:

First, the continued work on the operationalisation of the provisions under Part XI. It is imperative that we work to complete the exploitation regulations including the legal standards and guidelines and the establishment of regional centers pursuant to Article 156, which together will further facilitate our collective work in achieving our common goals as members and observers of the Authority. We must not be governed by time however, but must ensure that we adequately capture our common interests which properly balances the protection of the marine environment and the sustainable use of our limited resources; and

Second, the need to ensure that the Convention remains relevant and applicable to the realities in which we find ourselves in the present day. As we know, the norms set out under the Convention and the Part XI Agreement establishes principles which must continue to evolve in order to remain relevant to the changing times. As such, the special situation of small island developing States, due to their unique challenges and vulnerabilities, must be considered appropriately in the work of the International Seabed Authority and in particular, with the ongoing development of the Article 140(2) mechanism for equitable benefit sharing.

**Madam President,**

On that note, Tonga stands ready to work with all members, observers, contractors, and friends of the Authority to progress our efforts for a further 25 years for the benefit of mankind as a whole, and beyond. We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Secretary General and the staff of the Secretariat, and those who have toiled behind the scenes to bring the Authority to where it is today. Through increased international cooperation and diplomatic compromise, we can attain the objectives envisaged for the Authority.

Happy Birthday ISA and Happy Silver Jubilee

Thank you Madam President.