

## **INTERVENTION OF THE DELEGATION OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA**

### **Agenda Item 9: Report of the Secretary General (ISBA/25/A/2);**

**Madam President,**

Good afternoon and thank you again for giving me the floor.

Tonga would like to open by thanking the Host Country, Jamaica, for the warm welcome and hospitality which we have and continue to experience during our time here and we note and support the ongoing collaboration between the Authority and the host government of Jamaica.

**Madam President,**

We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and holistic report presented to us this morning and contained in document ISBA/25/A/2. The report clearly provides a detailed overview of the progressive work carried out by the Authority thus far, and we congratulate the Secretary-General for the significant strides made to date. We wish to convey our support for the ongoing good work of the Secretary-General and his team. In this regard, Tonga would like to make a number of comments and observations on certain sections of the Report.

**Madam President,**

On Part VIII, as a party to the Part XI agreement, contributions from member states are vital for the operation of the Authority particularly in delivering its mandate. Tonga in this regard wishes to encourage member states to ensure contributions are made in a timely manner particularly noting with concern that only 29% of assessed contributions for 2019 had been paid by members by the end of May this year.

We wish to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions to the Voluntary Trust Funds which has allowed for the participation of Commissioners and representatives from developing countries, in the sessions of the LTC and meetings of the Council respectively. Tonga has benefitted from both Funds for which we are grateful to allow us to contribute to the discussions and conversations in both integral organs of the Authority. Tonga as a small island developing State wishes to highlight and stress the importance of additional contributions to the Fund, and invite members, observers, and contractors in a position to do so, to contribute to these Funds to facilitate our ongoing partnerships in implementing our common goals at the Authority. We wish also to register Tonga's appreciation also to all contributions made to the Endowment Fund to promote and encourage the conduct of the all-important MSR in the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole. We also commend those who have provided funds to enable the ongoing crucial and timely work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Enterprise.

**Madam President,**

On Part XIV, the progress, development and implementation of the mining code for activities in the Area continues to be vital in ensuring the Authority's effective administration of activities in the Area for both present and future generations to come.

As we had highlighted in the discussions of the Council, it is crucial that the Authority ensures a robust regulatory framework is in place and we look forward to working with all members, observers and contractors towards this common goal, which includes the development of accompanying standards and guidelines. In this regard and as highlighted by the distinguished representative of Algeria on behalf of the African Group, the workshop and discussions in the Pretoria Workshop will be vital in this development.

Additionally, we are pleased to see that the Secretariat has undertaken the study of the national laws and regulations of member states pursuant to the Article 154 review and we look forward to its publication in the form of a technical study on the website of the Authority.

**Madam President,**

On Part XIX, as was highlighted in the side event yesterday, Tonga was indeed honoured to host the inaugural workshop for the Abyssal Initiative for SIDS, in collaboration with UN-DESA, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Pacific Community and we look forward to its ongoing implementation towards completion at the Second UN Ocean Conference next year.

**Madam President,**

On Part XXII, as the Authority holds the mandate for organising and controlling activities, in the Area in particular for administering the resources of the Area, the relationship and collaboration of the Authority with the United Nations, and other relevant international organizations and bodies, is becoming ever more important, particularly in promoting and enhancing its mandate.

We are pleased with the ongoing commitments of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat in ensuring the cooperation of the Authority with various organizations, particularly where the question and application of "due regard to other marine users" as highlighted in the Convention, becomes ever more important due to the various marine users and their respective legitimate rights and interests. The outcome of the second workshop on submarine cables and activities in the Area on "Developing Practical Options for the Implementation of the "due regard and reasonable regard" obligations under UNCLOS" held in Thailand on the 29th and 30th October last year, which Tonga was fortunate to attend and learn from, is pivotal in this regard.

As such, we highlight and acknowledge with appreciation the work of the Secretary-General in his various meetings, initiatives and partnerships with organisations including the UN-Oceans, ITLOS, IOC-UNESCO, IMO, the Pacific Community, Commonwealth

Secretariat, also including the International Cable Protection Committee, as well as meeting with our Leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum in the Republic of Nauru in 2018.

**Madam President,**

On Part XXIII and as highlighted by others, the Authority's participation in global and regional conferences, Tonga is pleased to see and supports the engagement of the Secretariat in the Intergovernmental Conference on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. It is crucial that the discussions and decisions made on key issues recognize and do not undermine the existing mandate and work of the Authority as highlighted in the General Assembly resolution 69/292.

**Finally, Madam President,**

On Part XVIII, we thank the Authority for the continued work undertaken in implementing its mandate of promoting marine scientific research in the Area, and capacity building of developing states. As we know capacity development and training are fundamental in ensuring the strengthening of human capacities to ensure the knowledge attained contributes to each respective countries' work on deep seabed mining, but also to the work of the Authority.

We would like to thank the African Group for their paper as contained in ISBA/25/A/8 which we note as a useful paper for discussion. As highlighted in paragraph 19 we look forward to working with the African Group, the secretariat, the Authority's other organs (in particular the Legal and Technical Commission), members and stakeholders on this subject. The input and contribution of all, members and stakeholders alike, will be useful in determining appropriate guidelines and additional avenues of capacity building and training which the International Seabed Authority, on its own, or in collaboration with others, can implement to address the gaps and needs of developing countries on the topic of seabed minerals. Working closely with the LTC on this subject will be useful given their work as it pertains to training when reviewing plans of work for the contractors under Article 156. Realizing also the options of centers for excellence which are mandated with undertaking training pursuant to Article 276 and 277 will be of particular importance as well on this issue.

On the issue of internships, Tonga has been very fortunate to have one of its legal officers undertake an internship with the Authority in 2013. Her experience here has not only helped her in other international engagements on behalf of Tonga, but also as a member of the Tonga Delegation since 2014. She has also been recently promoted to the position of Deputy Solicitor General as Senior Crown Counsel at the Attorney General's Office, a post she will assume after her completion of her Masters of International Environmental Law in New York later this year. Much of her success has been due to the important exposure she received at her internship here at the Authority. We hope that more opportunities such as these will be made available to more of our upcoming talent.

I thank you Madam President.