



# KŌRERO O TE 'ŌRAU

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17 February 2025

TO: Secretary-General Leticia Carvalho  
c/o Gwenaëlle Le Gurun  
Legal Officer, International Seabed Authority  
Email: [MadamSecretary-General@isa.org.jm](mailto:MadamSecretary-General@isa.org.jm)

FR: Teina Rongo, Ph.D. Marine Biology  
*Chairperson*  
Kōrero o te 'Ōrau  
Phone: +682 70160  
Email: [korerooteorau@gmail.com](mailto:korerooteorau@gmail.com)

RE: Kōrero o te 'Ōrau - Application for Observer Status at the International Seabed Authority

Dear Secretary-General Carvalho,

On behalf of Kōrero o te 'Ōrau, a registered environmental non-government organisation in the Cook Islands, I am writing to request observer status at the International Seabed Authority (ISA). This would fall under rule 82 of the ISA Rules of Procedure, and the Guidelines for observer status of non-governmental organizations with ISA (Annex, ISBA/25/A/16).

Kōrero o te 'Ōrau (KO) is an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) incorporated in 2017, consisting of Cook Islanders who are passionate about protecting the culture, environment, and natural resources of the nation. Kōrero o te 'ōrau in Cook Islands Māori translates to "knowledge of the sky, land, and sea".

We cover a wide range of environmental areas, and the health of the Pacific Ocean is one of our main concerns. While primarily a national NGO, we have conducted activities in several Pacific Island countries.

We have submitted the application (see annex) in the required under the guidelines for observer status of non-governmental organizations with the International Seabed Authority (ISBA/25/A/16, annex), more than three months before the opening of the thirtieth session of the Assembly, in July 2025.

Best regards,

Teina Rongo, Ph.D. Marine Biology  
Chairperson

ISBA/25/A/16 4/5 19-13155

**A. Information about the organization**

**1. Name of organization**

Kōrero o te 'Ōrau

**2. Address of headquarters**

PO Box 881, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

**3. Addresses of all branches and/or regional headquarters**

This is the only branch

**4. Telephone number:** +682 73560 (Jackalyn Rongo – Secretary)

**5. Fax number:** None

**6. Email address:** [korooteorau@gmail.com](mailto:korooteorau@gmail.com)

**7. Name, title and contact details of focal point**

Dr Teina Rongo, Chairperson

Email: [korooteorau@gmail.com](mailto:korooteorau@gmail.com)

Tel: +682 70160

**8. Background information on the organization**

Kōrero o te 'Ōrau (KO) is an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) incorporated in 2017, consisting of Cook Islanders who are passionate about protecting the culture, environment, and natural resources of the nation. Kōrero o te 'ōrau in Cook Islands Māori translates to "knowledge of the sky, land, and sea".

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*Kia mātūtū te tūrangā o te 'iti tangata Kūki 'Airani e to tātou ao nātura*

To improve the well-being of the indigenous people of the Cook Islands and our environment

The founding members of our organization carry close to heart a statement made by Baba Dioum during the General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1968: "In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."

**9. Is the organization a member of, affiliated to or otherwise associated with another organization that has been granted observer status with the Authority?**

Yes, we communicate regularly with other organisations that have observer status at the ISA, including Te Ipukarea Society.

**10. Is the organization affiliated to consultants of the Authority, contractors with the Authority, entities in connection with the law of the sea, the offshore and deep-sea mining industry, research institutes or the mineral marketing and processing industry?**

We engage as needed with the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority.

**11. Relationships with intergovernmental organizations**

We are accredited with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a not-for-profit civil society organization.

**12. List of publications and/or other relevant documentation**

Kōrero o te 'Ōrau - About Us: <https://youtu.be/Ute2iNJgi4A>

Tāua e Moana / Ocean & I: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFE9IVIDBGE>

Ocean Ancestors member: <https://www.oceanancestors.com/>

**B. Interest in matters under consideration by the Assembly**

**13. Briefly outline how your organization intends to demonstrate its interest in matters under consideration by the Assembly, including by answering questions 14 to 17 and by providing any other relevant information related to the application for observer status.**

Kōrero o te 'Ōrau intends to participate at the ISA as an observer both virtually and – when possible – in Kingston at ISA. We will follow the progress of the environmental regulations process at the LTA meetings and the ISA sessions. We will also encourage our Government participants to push for stringent environmental regulations to ensure, if mining goes ahead, it will not result in significant damage to the environment

**14. Briefly outline whether and how the purposes or activities of the organization relate to the work of the Authority.**

We are a very active environmental NGO attempting to provide a balanced view on the potential future impacts of deep-sea mining. Our messaging is based on scientific information to ensure our communities can take informed positions on matters related to ISA's work. We also hope to have more indigenous representation participate as observers at the ISA.

**15. Briefly outline whether and how your organization intends to contribute to the work of the Authority, for example by providing specialized information, advice or expertise, or by identifying or helping to procure the services of experts or consultants.**

We have experience in working closely with local communities and understand those ties to indigenous knowledge and culture. Ensuring indigenous values are considered within potential industry such as deep seabed mining needs to be considered within the work of the Authority.

**16. Briefly outline whether and how your organization has the expertise and the capacity to contribute, within its field of competence, to the work of the Authority, in particular in connection with the law of the sea, the protection of the marine environment, the offshore and deep-sea mining industry, technology, minerals processing and marketing, activities in the Area and marine scientific research in the Area.**

As an environmental NGO with experience in marine conservation, we are best placed to assist with input into the protection of the marine environment. Dr Teina Rongo (Marine Biologist) is our chairperson, and our membership consists of a wide range of individuals working in relevant fields both in the public and private sector. Our NGO is represented on the Technical Advisory Group of our Marae Moana (Marine Park) and has assisted in the collection of Marine Spatial Planning data.

**17. Briefly outline whether and how your organization intends to contribute to the capacity-building programmes and initiatives of the Authority (e.g., Secretary General's award, voluntary commitments of the Authority).**

We would widely disseminate the announcement of the Secretary General's award and encourage young people in the Cook Islands, and the Pacific region, to apply. Platforms that we would use to disseminate this information include our active social media pages:

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/korero\\_o\\_te\\_orau/](https://www.instagram.com/korero_o_te_orau/)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/korerooteorau>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@korerooteorau>

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,



Teina Rongo, Ph.D. Marine Biology  
*Chairperson*