

Mr. President

Thank you for giving Fiji the floor

Excellencies, esteemed delegates and colleagues.

Introduction

Fiji would like to first of all acknowledge and commend all the efforts that led to the compilation of the Secretary General's Annual Report. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the extensive work achieved for the year covered. It also showed the resilience of the Secretariat despite the various constraints including the ongoing efforts on the draft exploitation regulations. All these goes without saying the natural disasters such as the earthquake and the recent set back posed by Hurricane Beryl.

The achievements of the Authority over the last 30 years is remarkable and we acknowledge all the past and present leadership. . The current leadership has evolved placing the Authority at the centre of international Ocean Governance architecture, – this vision ensures the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area is a legacy worth noting. More importantly, the work guarantees the exercise of their rights consistent with UNCLOS, relating to the exploration and exploitation of seabed minerals in the Area.

Mr President,

ISA 2019-2025 Strategic Plan and 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

In saying this, Mr President, Fiji noted the significant progress accomplished in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2019-2025. With this, Fiji recalls its intervention in the Assembly in 2023, and that is for the 2024-2028 Draft Strategic Plan to recognize the need for the Rules, Regulations and Procedures to be developed and adopted, as a matter of priority, to prevent, reduce and control pollution and other hazards in the marine environment. Fiji underscores that regulatory, with clear procedures must ensure environmental protection and clear financial terms, is critical as a prerequisite prior to any application for a plan of work for exploitation.

Fiji noted the contribution of ISA to achieve the 2030 Agenda and independent review commissioned in 2021 which recognizes that ISA works in contributing to 12 of the 17 SDGS and confirms the unique role of ISA.

Fiji will continue to work with the ISA to ensure that regulations for seabed mineral mining under development by the ISA provides effective protection of marine environments by applying a precautionary and ecosystem-based approach, using science-based and transparent management, and ensuring effective compliance with a robust inspection mechanism. We welcome initiatives to obtain further scientific knowledge to ensure that any activity related to seabed minerals is informed by science and ecologically sustainable and should take into account the **Agreement** under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction

Mr President,

Marine Scientific Research (MSR)

Fiji noted the unique and specific mandate assigned to ISA under UNCLOS for MSR in the Area and the important progress made in implementing the strategic research priorities identified in the MSR Action Plan in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science. This was implemented through the initiative on the Global Call for Action to ensure the stewardship of the Area and its seabed resources for the benefit of all humanity through deep-sea science, technology and innovation which Fiji has joined. Fiji therefore, call on others to join in support of science diplomacy and reinforcement of the Mandate of ISA at a time where it is constantly questioned. In addition, The Strategic Plan reaffirms the importance of Marine Scientific Research to the responsible management of the oceans and its resources which Fiji supports.

Fiji would also like to highlight the importance of developing technology in mapping the Area which could be beneficial in the emerging interests in safeguarding our traditional knowledge of our big Ocean States of the Pacific. We the PSIDs have always supported the effort in research of the deep to know what we do not know!

The Authority and moreso the SG has always held the interest of all developing States including PSIDs in benefiting from the available possibilities in UNCLOS which is reflected in the preparation of the three respective programmes of actions, for the Antigua & Barbuda Action for SIDS (SIDS4)

In this regard, Fiji requests the SG to continue working closely with experts and technical partners to ensure that cooperation between organizations reflects accurately the respective mandates and competences for the regulation of activities in the Area related to the protection of the marine environment and conservation of biodiversity. ISA must

align its efforts with the Paris Agreement in ensuring that any ocean action contributes in mitigating global CO2 emissions in order to keep temperature rise below 1.5degrees Celsius.

We recognize the effort by all the State members and the authority in the draft of the regulations which would ensure the governance framework will include transparency, accountability for the benefit of humankind.

Women Empowerment and leadership in Ocean Affairs and Scientific Research

Mr, President, the Authority has shown its commitment in working on advancing women empowerment and leadership in ocean affairs and scientific research (IGROW and WIDSR projects). In underscoring the great work under SG Lodge's leadership, Fiji requests that more capacity building and training on the placement and role of women in all aspects of the work of ISA be accorded to PSIDS. Women of PSIDS including Fiji would like to also contribute to enhancing the work in this sector for the betterment of their countries, such as the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth. The results and plans for this project was discussed at the workshop in the Kingdom of Tonga in 2023. In addition, some of our women are even participating in the Deep Dive program designed by the Authority.

ISA serving the Pacific needs

One of the concerns raised following consultations with the Pacific in is on benefit sharing. It is encouraging to note that there are plans to discuss the regime that will underscore the common heritage of humankind. As we have always supported MSRs, Fiji notes the number of training programs offered by the Authority to interested parties which should be fit for purpose and delivers on the mandate in line with UNCLOS.

In concluding, Fiji would also commend the Authority in responding to our queries more so for Fiji and the Pacific, and in ensuring that all delegations irrespective of their size are given equal consideration at the ISA. With this we would like to acknowledge and thank our partners for their contributions in the ISA Voluntary Trust Fund.

Mr President, Fiji supports and commends the SG's Annual Report.

Thank You.