

PRESS RELEASE

The 25th Session of the International Seabed Authority (the Authority) met at its headquarters in Kingston Jamaica from the 15th – 26th July 2019. The meeting was also extraordinary given it marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Authority since the coming into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1994. Members of the UNCLOS are *ipso facto* members of the Authority. There are 168 members of the Authority to-date including the European Union. Tonga became a member state of the Authority upon accession to the UNCLOS in 1995.

The Authority is governed under Part XI of the UNCLOS and its 1994 Implementing Agreement. The primary mandate of the Authority is to regulate deep seabed minerals (DSM) activities in the Area and to give special emphasis to ensuring that the marine environment is protected from any harmful effects which may arise during DSM activities. DSM extraction will not commence until a comprehensive mining code is agreed upon by the members of the Authority. As one of the 36 elected members of the Council, the executive body of the Authority, Tonga remains seized of the work of the Authority and continues its engagement with members, observers, and other stakeholders, to ensure the mining code finds the important balance between the need to holistically conserve and protect the marine environment, whilst equitably allowing for the sustainable use of its limited mineral resources as a contributing element to Tonga's sustainable development through the TSDFII, the SAMOA Pathway, and SDG14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At the 25th Session this year, Tonga continued in its role as Vice President of the Council on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group of States. The 26th Session in 2020 will see the Asia-Pacific Group hold the Presidency of the Council. The President of the Council will have the important role of guiding the work of the Council to complete the mining code by the end of 2020. Tonga also for the first time this year presented to the Council a non-paper for the Council's (and Finance Committee's) consideration. The paper submitted issues related to small island developing States that should be considered in the creation of the financial mechanism which is to be used to share the proceeds of all DSM activities in the Area. To mark the 25th anniversary and silver jubilee of the Authority, the Delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga also presented gifts to the Secretary-General of the Authority Mr. Michael Lodge which were a wooden carving and tapa cloth.

The Delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga was comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations), the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Finance, and the Attorney General's Office. The composition represented the ongoing whole-of-government of approach by the executive government to ensure Tonga's national interests were projected and protected. The delegation was led by Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations Dr. T. Suka Mangisi, with members that included Deputy Secretary for Lands and Natural Resources Mr. Taaniela Kula, Special Advisor Mr. Siosiua 'Utoikamanu, Senior Legal Advisor Ms. Rose Lesley Kautoke from the Attorney General's Office, Economic Advisor Ms. 'Ilaisane Ve'a from the Ministry of Finance, Legal Advisor Ms. 'Elisiva 'Akau'ola from the

Attorney General's Office, and Environment Advisor Ms. Cadinia Tonga'onevai from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

Kingston Jamaica
Friday, 26th July 2019