



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
HON MARK BROWN
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

International Seabed Authority Side Event at the
UN Ocean Decade Conference 2024
Opening Remarks by Honourable Prime Minister Mark Brown

“Leveraging knowledge, innovation and empowerment in deep-sea research
in support of the stewardship of the Area for the benefit of humankind.”

Barcelona, Spain | 12 April 2024

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Kia Orana and warm Pacific greetings to you all.

Earlier this week, I underscored the importance of identifying and prioritising future avenues for ocean knowledge and scientific advancement at national, regional and global levels.

It is my pleasure to give the opening remarks for this important side event on leveraging knowledge, innovation and empowerment in deep-sea research in the international seabed Area. As a Large Ocean State, a Member of the ISA and a sponsoring State, the Cook Islands are also pleased to co-organize this satellite event.

For us, data and knowledge is more valuable than the resource itself. This is because it is only with knowledge and understanding that we can make sound decisions to unlock our Blue Economy and improve our lives and those of our children. Knowledge empowers us all.

I want to thank the Secretary General Michael Lodge and the International Seabed Authority for hosting this event and for leading these discussions on the need to advance and innovate in deep-sea research.

I note that this year, the ISA celebrates its 30th Anniversary. And most, if not all its work so far has been and continues to be entirely dedicated to advancing science and global knowledge of the deep-sea for the benefit of us all.

In 2020, the ISA became one of the first intergovernmental organizations to adopt an entirely dedicated global deep-sea research agenda identifying agreed research priorities in support of the implementation of the UN Ocean Decade.

It stands today as the cornerstone of evidence-based governance of the global commons and the prerequisite for the sustainable use of ocean resources as well as the protection of the marine environment.



The Cook Islands, akin to the ISA and many other countries, are amidst an unprecedented deluge of data. Modern exploration platforms and modern sensor suites deliver data in unparalleled volumes and widely different formats and contexts.

But our questions often remain the same. The weight of our decisions never seem to lessen. Effective leveraging of knowledge, innovation and empowerment in deep-sea research has never been more important.

In the Pacific region, we have a profound cultural drive to inform our people. From professionals to university students to school age children and to their parents and family. It is essential that we bring our people along on this journey and ensure that our newfound knowledge is accessible to all. As we say in the Cook Islands: “No one in the tribe is to be left out. No one left behind”.

Complementary to the ISA's global deep-sea research agenda is the recent endorsement by Pacific Island Forum leaders last year, on the establishment of a regional Pacific Center of Excellence in Deep Ocean Science – or PCEDOS as we call it.

This collaborative center will work with all interested stakeholders to further leverage knowledge, innovation, and empowerment.

Today's panel comes at a crucial time for us. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of collaboration internationally, regionally, and nationally to build a robust knowledge base.

Compiling and sharing information effectively is a crucial and complex process. With cooperation in gathering, disseminating, and translating information we can turn it into actionable knowledge necessary in achieving a well-informed global community.



The Cook Islands have been privileged to contribute to and capacity build from the ISA's MSR Action plan.

We are also proud to have with us our very own Cook Islands scientist Rima Browne, who was last year's winner of the ISA Secretary-General's Award for excellence in deep-sea research – for her work on creating the Cook Islands first seabed map based on international data.

This is the type of new knowledge led by our people that I am talking about.

Ladies and gentlemen, these success stories can only be achieved if all of us agree to work together. The ISA is an excellent platform to facilitate this as it brings together governments, scientific institutions, academia, contractors, and the public.

The Cook Islands was one of the first to sign the Global Call to action and I support the efforts of the Secretary-General to continue rallying more stakeholders in its support. I invite you all to join to further maximize and amplify our collective actions for the benefit of all.

Kia Manuia, Muchas Gracias.