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Samoa hosts DSM Policy Formulation and Legislative Drafting Training Workshop

Fifty government representatives from 12 Pacific countries gathered in Samoa for the regional training workshop on deep sea minerals policy formulation and legislative drafting. Held from 18-22 May 2015, the workshop was organised by the DSM Project to discuss key elements of developing robust and effective regulatory frameworks.

The countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) presented their policy and legal status, together with their achievements in the DSM sector. These countries shared experiences and challenges, and identified the strengths and weaknesses in existing DSM policies and legislation. They also discussed whether there was need for further development and changes to the current frameworks.

The participants agreed that having robust and effective regulatory frameworks in place before issuing exploration and mining licenses is crucial to the effective control and demarcation of power and decision making.

As a result of the training workshop, participants were able to improve their skills in legislative drafting and policy formulation.

Participants of the deep sea minerals policy formulation and legislative drafting training workshop in Apia, Samoa
DSM Community of Practice to be established

A community of practice will be established for Pacific Islands and their policy officers and legislative drafters involved with the deep sea minerals activities. Using up-to-date technology, the community of practice allows legal practitioners, ordinarily spread over vast geographical distances, to virtually get-together and usefully exchange practices, experiences, questions and challenges with regards to the development and implementation of their national deep sea mineral policies and legislation.

For former DSM legal interns and now legal practitioners, this move is a sure way forward for Pacific Islands countries.

“This is a timely initiative. By fostering the means by which practices, experiences, questions and challenges with regards to the development and implementation of deep sea mineral policies and legislation can be shared, new ideas can be developed and current ones enhanced. I think this is a great idea and it will help Pacific Countries develop DSM policies and legislations efficiently and effectively,” said Maito’o Hauirae, from the Solomon Islands.

“In order to achieve the common goal of providing robust and concrete legislation and awareness of deep sea minerals mining in the Pacific region, cooperation is of paramount importance. Considering the fact that the Pacific region is made up of small island nations who are leading in this new venture of seabed mining, a community of practice is the platform on which representatives and officials from the respective island nations can congregate to share the experiences and lessons encountered in achieving that common goal. By learning from each other’s experiences, we can lead by example and set the precedent by which other nations entering this new field of mining can learn from,” said Teona Ivano from PNG.

Asiena Taumoepeau, from Tonga said, “[The Community of Practice initiative] will help with capacity development at all levels of the industry; and build awareness of all facets, including the economic, legal, environmental and social impacts. It may prove to be a good example for other industries to follow as well, contributing to the DSM reputation of a trailblazing trendsetter, embarking and engaging in new possibilities.”

“Deep Sea Mining is a new frontier industry where there are many unknowns, many uncertainties, and many challenges which, if not addressed properly, may expose vulnerable Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to social, customary, environmental, and political problems. The establishment of a community of practice will create better networking, better information sharing, a better knowledge base, and better enhancement of personal growth in DSM. This will equip DSM officials in providing well-informed advice, leading to well-informed decisions,” Calvy Aonima from the Solomon Islands said.

The new virtual community will be facilitated through an online portal managed by the DSM Project, and will continue to enable dialogue between countries through online discussion forums after the DSM Project ends. The portal can be accessed via http://gsd.spc.int/dsm/index.php/community-of-practice
Solomon Islands holds youth debate on DSM

Solomon Islands held an exciting and engaging youth debate on DSM in June.

Debates such as this encourage youths and students to research and gain more knowledge on deep sea minerals and, at the same time, increases public understanding of the key issues related to them through open forums.

The debaters consisted of fourteen students from nine high schools in Honiara. Each student showed keen enthusiasm for the debate. As the students progressed through debating rounds, the three judges, Dr Jimmie Rodgers (former SPC Director General), Sir Bruce Saunders (a board member of the Rotary Club of Honiara), and Ms Rose Abana (CEO for the Chamber of Commerce) had a difficult task determining the winner. It was a close call between the last two finalists but Ms Patisha Del Wate, a Year-12 student from King George IV High School was announced as the winner at the end of a long but very successful night of debating.

The DSM Project provided certificates and prize monies for the event for each debater. Ms Teina Mackenzie, from Te Ipukarea Society in the Cook Islands, who coordinated the Cook Islands youth debate in 2013, was contracted by the DSM Project to also coordinate and assist the Solomon Island students with their preparations and to also organise the event.

The DSM Project encourages its member countries to conduct youth debates as they are a great way to get youths and communities involved in DSM discussions. The DSM Project is happy to provide assistance. To date, Cook Islands and Fiji have held youth debates with the support of the DSM Project.

Assessment of the social cost and benefits of mining deep sea minerals in the Pacific region

The DSM Project visited the Cook Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and Papua New Guinea (PNG) in March 2015 in its efforts to collect data and information based on the resource potential of the three types of minerals. These visits were for the purpose of developing an economic, social and environmental Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) of deep sea mining for the Pacific Islands region.

The Cook Islands was selected due to its significant manganese nodules potential, where the RMI was selected because of its significant cobalt rich crusts potential. PNG was selected due to its significant seafloor massive sulphide potential and the advanced nature of the Solwara 1 Project.

Country visits were critical for consulting with multiple stakeholders to acquire information, data, and views necessary for the development of a comprehensive CBA.

The purpose of the CBA was to determine whether the benefits of deep sea mining outweigh the costs, and by how much. It is expected that the CBA will form the foundation for informed decision-making and management plans by DSM member countries on deep sea mining in the future. The CBA report will be made available on the DSM Project’s website once it has been finalised.
Public consultations in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) held a series of public DSM consultations in Majuro and Ebeye in April 2015.

The consultations, organized with the assistance of the DSM Project, presented and discussed the vision, goals and objectives of the draft national DSM Policy and the contents of the Seabed Management Bill. The successful meetings were well attended by Government representatives, national agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), churches, members of parliament, the Council of Iroij and communities. Consultations involving a wide range of stakeholders help build the necessary trust and understanding to effectively progress in this new industry.

Secretary of the Ministry of Resources and Development of RMI, Rebecca Lorennij said the involvement of all the people of the Marshall Islands, including local communities, was key in the approach followed by the Government to move forward with the deep-sea minerals industry.

The consultations provided the RMI Government with the opportunity to raise awareness of opportunities for the country to engage with the DSM industry, with the view of discussing potential alternative sources of revenue – a critical issue with the US Compact, coming to an end in 2023. Challenges associated with the development of the DSM industry were also at the core of the discussions.

RMI is planning to hold further consultations in the future.

Kiribati NOMC ready to execute 2015 DSM in-country activities

The Kiribati National Offshore Minerals Committee (NOMC) has submitted its 2015 work plan to the DSM Project. The Project recommends the establishment of NOMC in each of its 15 Pacific member States and is able to provide funding of activities based on approved work plans.

Kiribati NOMC activities planned for 2015 include monthly radio programmes, development and review of the DSM policy, legislation, reproduction of DSM promotional materials for public display and information sharing, and raising public awareness programmes, including high school visitations in Tarawa.

The Kiribati NOMC has been successfully carrying out its role of planning and executing DSM and related activities in Kiribati since 2013.
Tonga DSM Awareness Program a success

Tonga’s DSM awareness program has been successful in disseminating information on deep sea minerals nationwide, evident by the increased interest and questions on the prospects of minerals mining received from the public and news media.

The awareness program, administered by Tonga’s Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources Division – under the DSM In-country Focal Point, Mr Taaniela Kula and Geotechnical Officer, Mr Apai Moala – involves the production of DSM video and audio content for radio and television broadcasts.

To date, the program has aired the DSM Project documentaries (Out Of Darkness and Under Pressure) while producing and releasing six panel videos and six panel audios for both the AM and FM Programs.

Initially set to finish in December 2014, the program deadline has since been extended to September 2015.

The DSM Project is happy to provide funding for Tonga to carry out these great in-country DSM public awareness initiatives.

Tonga requests for review on its seabed minerals exploration activities

Tonga has taken the opportunity to request a review of the deep sea minerals exploration reports/results submitted by Exploration Companies, operating in their Exclusive Economic Zone. This in-country confidential review was aimed to identify and highlight gaps in exploration and reporting, and to provide advice and a summary report on the depth of scientific (particularly geological and environmental) research and exploration activities.

The DSM Project is happy to assist Pacific Island countries wishing to have their deep sea minerals exploration activities reviewed.

New report on Kiribati Manganese Nodules

A new report has been compiled on the manganese nodule resources in Kiribati’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

At the request of the Kiribati Government, the DSM Project was happy to offer assistance, by contracting David Cronan, Emeritus Professor at the Imperial College in London to compile an assessment report on the “Distribution, Abundance and Composition of Manganese Nodules in the Kiribati Exclusive Economic Zone Central Equational Pacific”.

Possibilities of mining manganese nodules in Kiribati have been studied since the early 1980’s, and a number of reports have been produced as a result. However, a new report was needed after a series of changes occurred. First, the development of a Geological Model in the late 1990s to explain South Pacific nodule variability necessitated a re-examination of existing Kiribati nodule reports and data to see if anything was overlooked or misinterpreted in the earlier studies. Second, a recently developed interest in ‘rare’, ‘green’ and ‘technology’ elements necessitated a re-examination of Kiribati nodule data for information on these elements, and the collection of new data on them. Lastly, the current Kiribati application to the United Nations to extend its EEZ necessitated a review of the manganese nodules in this area.

The report reveals that higher nodule abundances occur in the southern Line Islands and Phoenix Islands within Kiribati’s EEZs. Based on present knowledge, the Line Islands probably offer the greatest economic potential for nodules.

The DSM Project has produced a similar report of this kind for the Cook Islands in 2012. Other member countries wishing to have assessment reports compiled for them can do so by request.
CSO Perspectives

As part of its role to engage all stakeholders in the DSM discussion in the Pacific region, the DSM Project acknowledges the importance of engaging Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in these discussions. The DSM Project invites CSOs to provide their perspectives on DSM activities to be featured in its quarterly newsletter. This first CSO contribution is from Ms Teina MacKenzie, from the Te Ipukarea Society in the Cook Islands. Since its inaugural consultation workshop held in Nadi, Fiji in June 2011, the DSM Project has been inviting and supporting CSO representatives to attend consultation workshops and meetings including awareness and stakeholder consultation programmes as well as during the last seven regional DSM training workshops. Ongoing interactions will result in better understanding of each other’s perspective and approach, increase knowledge of DSM issues, and improves working relationships among key stakeholders.

Ms. Teina Mackenzie

Te Ipukarea Society (TIS)
Cook Islands

Participation is what you make of it. Te Ipukarea Society has been one of the NGO entities that have been involved in the SPC-EU DSM Project workshops held since August 2012. After that first workshop, we were given occasions to present at further workshops – giving us a rare opportunity to raise issues or ask questions that were not previously considered and which, when presented appropriately, allowed us to contribute to an atmosphere of understanding and camaraderie so that more sensitive conversations could be had without confrontation. Although we are an environmental NGO, our focus encompasses the human as well as the environment aspects of how deep sea mineral mining will impact our nations. As such, many of our presentations spoke to the human side of the issue, reminding those present that we are all responsible for leaving a better place for future generations.

It was never lost on our organisation that the DSM Project was created to assist SPC member country governments to prepare for a new industry intended to provide economic development for those that chose to develop it. This is the mandate and we’ve always known that. The fact that NGO engagement was sought and encouraged even, at times, to the dismay of member country governments, shows to some extent the commitment of a regional organization to see value in and understand the importance of a collaborative effort, including all stakeholders.

Through our engagement with this project and associated marine-related entities, Te Ipukarea Society has been privy to the many developments in the area of DSM locally, regionally and internationally. Continued networking and communication with top scientists and experts in their field, as well as with our own local seabed minerals authority, gives us access to progress data and documents and we are invited to comment on draft frameworks, regulations and legislation, as well as sit on panels for discussions. We have also ensured to be active in other marine-related areas such as Marine Protected Areas, Traditional Knowledge, Climate Change and Fisheries, knowing that dealing with issues surrounding DSM in isolation is not conducive to positive progress. Knowledge of what is happening globally with other extractive industries and how those countries are faring is also important – there is a lot that can be gained by understanding the successes and failures of those before us.

Te Ipukarea Society will continue to work with this project, knowing that there is always the possibility that, when enough is known, some nations will choose not to continue. For those that do continue with exploration and mining, we can feel somewhat comforted by the fact that we were involved to an extent that made a difference in the manner in which development ensues and that our involvement was a positive contribution.

One of our most visible achievements, through being involved with the SPC-EU DSM Project, was the creation of a Youth Debate on the issue of DSM and holding the very first of this type of event in the Cook Islands. To espouse the benefits of hosting such an event would require more space than this article allows but, suffice to say, we are creating future leaders that engage in issues of import in their nations, are able to consider pros and cons and share the findings with their communities. We are encouraging them to participate in decision-making and are pleased that they recognize that “Participation is what you make of it.”
Internship Programme

As part of its capacity-building initiative, the DSM Project has established successful Internship Programmes. The aim of this scheme is to build a sustainable source of in-country expertise, as the interns are encouraged to return to their country to work with national authorities involved in deep sea minerals activities. This scheme provides a two-month internship position with the Project at SPC’s Geoscience Division (GSD) in Suva.

The internship vacancies are available on a rolling basis and preference is given to applicants from our 15 member countries. For more information on the internships or to apply, please visit the website: http://gsd.spc.int/dsm/index.php/get-involved

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Environment Interns

Name: Ms Naomi Coalala  
Nationality: Fiji  
Duration: 27 January-31 March 2015

Naomi graduated from the University of Porto in Portugal, with a Masters in Environmental Science in 2013. She joined the Project as the 2nd Environment Intern. During her internship, her main tasks included providing content for the DSM Projects website, researching and drafting text for the Regional Environment Management Framework and she has begun drafting a brochure on Cobalt-rich Crusts’ environments.

“The internship allowed me to work on numerous tasks that will contribute to my professional development. I really enjoyed learning from the DSM Project. This experience has opened my eyes to the importance of international and regional co-operation in promoting environmental sustainability.”

Name: Nancy Defe  
Nationality: Solomon Islands  
Duration: 30 March-5 June 2015

Nancy completed a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies from the University of the South Pacific before joining the Project as the 3rd Environment Intern. During her internship, she conducted a literature review on deep sea minerals studies undertaken in the Solomon Islands. She also assisted with research for the Regional Environment Management Framework (REMF) for Deep Sea Mineral Activities, and an information brochure on Cobalt-rich Crusts.

Legal Intern

Name: Aldric Hipa  
Nationality: Niue  
Trainee Duration: 27 April-23 May 2015

Aldric is the first Niuean national to join the DSM Project. He graduated with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree from Emalus Campus, USP Vanuatu in December 2014 and joined the Project as part of his Professional Diploma in Legal Practice (PDLP). His main task included conducting a legislative review of country laws and participating in the DSM Regional Legislative Training Workshop in Apia, Samoa May 2015. Before pursuing his LLB in 2011, he worked as a Legal Intern at the Crown Law Office, Government of Niue. He hopes to use his knowledge and experience from the Project to strengthen Niue’s position and framework in regards to DSM.
New resources

Expert Q&A with Cindy Van Dover

http://gsd.spc.int/dsm/index.php/q-a

This Q&A with Cindy Van Dover was produced by the DSM Project as part of its awareness-raising on deep seabed mining in the Pacific Islands region. Van Dover is a professor of Biological Oceanography at the Duke University in the United States and an expert on deep ocean exploration.

The video shows underwater footage from Seafloor Massive Sulphide sites, bringing to life the surrounding environment. Prof Van Dover answers some of the most asked questions such as:

- What is it like to visit a hydrothermal vent?
- What kinds of organisms live near these vents?
- Why is it important to learn about these organisms?
- Why should scientists be involved in commercial mining activities like the Solwara 1 in Papua New Guinea?
- What can be done to minimise the impacts of deep sea mining?
- Why is it important to protect the life around hydrothermal vents?
- Will deep sea mining have an impact on fishing resources that people rely on in the Pacific?
- What do we need to do to protect these biological resources?

Get Involved

DSM Project Internships

The DSM Project offers internships in Law, Environment, Communication and Geology. For more information on the internships visit the website: http://gsd.spc.int/dsm/

DSM Project LinkedIn Group

The DSM Project has set up a LinkedIn Group Page: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Deep-Sea-Minerals-Project-6646605

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