

## **Official Opening**

*Mr Samuela Namosimalua (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Environment, Fiji)*

Ambassador Gerson Jackson, FSM's Ambassador to Fiji, Mr David Sheppard, Director General of the SPREP, Professor Michael Pettersen, Director of the SOPAC Division of the SPC, government representatives from the Pacific island countries and territories, representatives of NGO's, distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen - Bula Vinaka and a very good morning to you all. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to have the task of formally opening this regional training workshop on the environment aspects of deep sea minerals development. The role of my Ministry in Fiji's context is basically to support the government move towards economic growth by ensuring environmental protection towards sustainable development and enforcement of the Environment Management Act 2005 in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The 9<sup>th</sup> Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation of Protected Areas – one of the outcome of the conference is the development of a framework to provide guidance to PICs and territories, regional organizations, international donor communities working together to achieve the global 2020 targets of the Convention of the Biological Diversity through the implementation of national biodiversity strategies, action plans and other international, regional and local conservation initiatives.

Pacific ecosystems provide essential resources not only for pacific islands but also the entire world. The essential services provided by Pacific ecosystems are often not fully accounted for, hidden or unrecognized; fisheries, tourism, coastal protection, government participation and future resilience all depends on appropriate management of our natural resources. Management of natural resources is fundamental to sustainable development, as is education and health. The pacific islands have small populations and economies yet they are stewards of an immense area of ocean and its associated global ecosystem. In the context of climate change, the Hon Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands in his closing remarks at the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas mentioned that Fiji may not face some of the crisis that some of our neighbors face in regards to climate change but already some of our villages have to be relocated and we certainly have to shoulder some of the fall-outs of the looming catastrophe of some of our PICs.

Deep sea mining is a new frontier development for PIC's and territories and requires a consolidative effort and partnership between stakeholders in facilitating the need to thrive in terms of economic growth whilst ensuring sustainability of natural resources. The protection of marine ecosystems and biodiversity is very important and consideration must be given on the national strategy and action plans and other international, regional and local initiatives while endeavoring in deep sea minerals exploration and exploitation.

I hope that the one week workshop will provide a forum for continued discussion and resolutions on environmental issues relating to deep sea mining amongst other related matters. With those few words I would like to wish the workshop a fruitful and productive week and declare the workshop on environment aspects of DSM activities open.