

Responding Remarks

Professor Mike Petterson (Director - SOPAC Division, SPC)

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen. I know from these workshops that they are quite extensive and information rich therefore please get engaged and be engaged in discussions throughout the week. The previous speakers highlighted the need for Inclusivity and I think our approach is inclusive – and that is important in everything we do as a development agency. If it isn't inclusive then we are not doing our job right. We are involved in communities, civil societies, and government and in many areas of society through the sharing of information, views and listening to concerns of members of the public. But I am going to talk about being realistic as well and why we are where we are, the new development issue in the Pacific and why deep sea minerals is actually something that we will get excited about – and how to manage it properly as this is the whole reason why this workshop is all about.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Environment Fiji, Mr Samuela Namosimalua, his Excellency Hon Gerson Jackson, FSM's Ambassador to Fiji, the Director General of SPREP, Mr David Sheppard, senior government officials of PIC's and territories, representatives of regional and internal agencies, the private sector, CSO's, media, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Director General of the SPC, Dr Jimmy Rodgers, I would like to thank the Permanent Secretary for his warm words of welcome and advice in opening this "4th Regional Training Workshop on the Environment Perspectives of Deep Sea Minerals Development". This is one of the many deep sea minerals events that we have had in Fiji and across the region. We've looked at various themes: (i) biological, geological, technological and environment aspects of DSM; (ii) DSM law and contract negotiations; and (iii) social impacts and stakeholder consultation. We are looking into covering all aspects of the DSM through the initiation of these interactive workshops.

I am honored and privileged to work in close collaboration with SPREP on this workshop. Together both organizations have worked hard to put this workshop together especially in trying to get a balance program, so as David Sheppard said it's really collaboration in action. Similarly I would like to thank my SPC colleagues because to put on something like this is not an easy venture. I also want to thank our funding and developing partner the European Union for their financial assistance which allowed the SPC-EU Deep Sea Minerals Project to hold a series of DSM training workshops in the Pacific region. DSM is a big issue and at the moment all we got is one Project that might end in two years time and my job is to make sure that that is not all we got.

The Pacific leaders see this as perhaps a paradigm shift for economic development. What are the opportunities that PIC's have to generate funds? There are no huge opportunities in the region; we've got fish, natural agricultural resources, on-land minerals and energy deposits and now we have this offshore opportunity – so it's not going to go away in terms of it being seen as a prime opportunity for economic development. It is an opportunity for countries to have their own money and not be heavily dependent on donor funds. We also have to remember in this region we have huge economic issues to think about. Many countries have 50% unemployment, some have 50% poverty level, and there are perhaps still a lot of people in the region that do not have access to electricity, clean water and proper sanitation. The best way of alleviating poverty is generating jobs, and maybe this industry can help us get there. So I want to put out the other side of it, not just the environmental side only – there's an economical development side too to consider and of course sustainable development is all about getting the balance right.

I also want to acknowledge and welcome the presence of Ms Teherenui Koteka from the CI who was the winner of a DSM Public Youth Debate coordinated by both the Te Ipukarea Society (TIS) and the CI Seabed Minerals Authority - a NGO and government initiative. I was in the Cook Islands in October for the SOPAC Annual Meeting and had the opportunity to attend this debate which was on deep sea minerals and development. These students took time after school for two weeks to read and understand issues relating to DSM and the outcome of their hard work paid off – it was a very successful event and a good model that other countries would perhaps want to adopt. The DSM Project in SPC financially supported this initiative and will do what they can to help other PIC's develop similar initiatives.

Mining in general is controversial and gets a bit of bad press. When people think of mining, they also think - sustainable development. It's not just taking out the ore off the ground, it is also looking after the land and/or marine environment, in this case from which the minerals is extracted from. And there is really good thinking that could be practiced in this area and maybe workshops could be conducted on that sometime. As a Geologist, mining has been a big part of my career, yes there are places where you will find big holes dug in the ground but that's only one side of mining. I see beauty in all mines; some of the most beautiful sights I've been in the world are rehabilitated mines. Wonderful nature sites created in areas where the nature wasn't there before the mining. Mining doesn't always destroy, it can also create.

Secondly, it's the multinational nature of the mining companies - do we trust them? Some of them are bigger than countries and are very powerful. They can bring huge teams of lawyers and accountants. What can our Pacific Island countries do? We need to prepare ourselves. Even big countries struggle in negotiating with these multinational companies. This is a challenge we have and another issue of the controversy relating to mining. It's the trust between the private sector and everybody else.

The third issue is money. There is a very important reason why governments get involved in mining, and that is to source funds for national building, society building, job generation, infrastructure development, addressing climate change, and addressing environmental issues etc. The best way to adapt to climate change is to empower the economies so that individual nations commit to climate change mitigation measures. This is one way forward, but unfortunately money does not always go to where we want it to go and that also brings suspicion. Indigenous communities don't necessary have power in society therefore are often ignored, decisions are made without involving them, for this reasons, mining can have a bad name, but all types of development go through this processes, it isn't just mining. However mining is one of the biggest industries where this issue is at the forefront.

Now I want to talk about hypocrisy. If I asked you - who doesn't have a mobile phone? Not many of you will put your hands up. In mobile phones alone, they are made up of 66 mineral commodities. We like these things but we don't think about where they come from. We're all stakeholders in mining and stakeholders in energy production. How many want to go back and live in caves, with no lights, no electricity and no water? Not many of us would like to do that, so

we're all part of this, so let's not be too hypocritical when we start analyzing and getting very emotional about it.

There is lots of competition for economies on on-land mining; hence deep sea is becoming very attractive – some people refer to it as the last refuge. The science and technology have developed through the years and now the deep ocean floor is within reach. Deep sea mining is going to happen within our lifetime therefore the challenge is how to approach it. Deep sea mining laws and regulations need to be put in place, we cannot stop PIC's from deep sea mining but we can at least rise to the challenge and see how we can move this forward sustainably.