

Preparatory Committee Meeting for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States

Report on the Side Event entitled “Leveraging the BBNJ Agreement in support of resilient prosperity in SIDS”, organized by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, in partnership with the Alliance of Small Island States and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner. Over 50 participants attended the side event, which took place on 25 January 2024, between 1:15-2:30pm, in Conference Room E, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Opening remarks were delivered by Ms. Matilda Bartley, Deputy Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations; Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; and Mr. Vladimir Jares, Director, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) on behalf of Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel.

Ms. Charlotte Salpin, Senior Legal Officer, DOALOS provided an overview of the BBNJ Agreement with a focus on SIDS and overview of DOALOS activities to promote a better understanding of the Agreement and prepare for its entry into force. Mr. Peni Suveinakama, Manager and Ocean Analyst for the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, then provided an overview of the coordinated work being undertaken in the Pacific in respect of the BBNJ Agreement.

The side event then moved to a moderated discussion on the special circumstances, interests and needs of SIDS in the context of the BBNJ Agreement, during which the following panellists provided remarks: Ms Kimberly Louis, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Saint Lucia to the United Nations; Mr. Nathaniel Khng, Legal Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations; Ms. Faatimah Saarah Monawvil, Director, Human Rights & Environment Program, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) on behalf of the High Seas Alliance. Fruitful discussions were had between the three panellists and participants, in particular on the needs and challenges of SIDS to ratify and implement the BBNJ Agreement and on the work that States and civil society were undertaking in this regard.

Overall the side event was successful in raising awareness and promoting a better understanding of the BBNJ Agreement, in particular in its relation to SIDS; providing a forum for discussion of the challenges, opportunities and potential contributions of SIDS in becoming parties and implementing the BBNJ Agreement; and contributing to the discussion for identification of capacity-building needs of SIDS in ratifying and implementing the BBNJ Agreement, and providing information on how SIDS can benefit from the programme of technical assistance and capacity building activities developed by DOALOS and other actors in this regard.