



AUSTRALIA



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Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 – General Statement of the delegation of Australia

**Statement by Mr Michael Bliss
Head of Delegation, Australia**

(Check against delivery)

Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The delegation of Australia would like to associate ourselves in full with the statement of the Pacific Islands Forum, delivered by the delegation of Papua New Guinea.

It is with a sense of satisfaction, privilege and optimism that the delegation of Australia participates in this Preparatory Committee meeting.

Satisfaction that 14 years after Australia, working with our Pacific Islands Forum partners, first drew attention to this issue in the General Assembly, and after years of subsequent discussions, momentum building and negotiation, we have arrived collectively at this point – the commencement of these important and historic negotiations.

Privilege, that we have the opportunity to contribute to further developing the fundamentally important legal order of the oceans, established by the 1982 Convention and its two implementing agreements, through this prospective third agreement.

And finally optimism, that this Preparatory Committee process will arrive at positive and balanced consensus recommendations to the General Assembly, by

the end of 2017, that will give further life to the Convention's obligations relating to the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Chair,

We congratulate you on your appointment. We know that the burden on your shoulders will be substantial. You have our full confidence and support.

We are confident that under your leadership – and with the crucial support of DOALOS, the Bureau and the chairs of our working groups – we will arrive at positive, consensus recommendations in 2017.

Finally, we come to this meeting with ideas and contributions to put forward, including those shaped by our domestic and regional experiences – particularly in the Pacific.

We have listened carefully to the statements of delegations so far. We recognise that there is a diversity of views, interests and perspectives. We remain confident, however, that we will find positive and pragmatic solutions which acknowledge and respect the interests and objectives of all delegations present.

With respect to marine genetic resources, we are confident that we can reach a pragmatic outcome which respects the balance of interests among all delegations, including on their status under the Convention, the need to prevent disincentives for innovation and investment and on the integrity of the international intellectual property system.

With respect to area-based management tools and environmental impact assessments, we are certain we can work collectively to establish best practice international standards and principles which support and catalyse effective action and that respect, and do not undermine or duplicate, regional and sectoral management.

We look forward to exploring, in more depth, our views and the views of all delegations, over the next two weeks; and throughout the PrepComm process.

We trust that the constructive and cooperative spirit and free and open exchange of views that defined the Working Group process of 2014 and 2015 will be a hallmark of this Preparatory Committee process.

It will only be through such a spirit that we will be able, collectively, to shape an agreement that reflects the interests of the global community as a whole.

Thank you.