

Cooks Lynch Learns From Seabed Mineral Workshop

Written by Administrator

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Only three months ago Paul Lynch thought the chances of successfully mining the manganese nodules that cover a large area of his country's seabed was 'virtually' impossible. He does not think so anymore.

Mr. Lynch, is a Cook Islands lawyer and the Senior Legal advisor to the Office of the Minister of Minerals and Natural Resources. He was in Fiji recently attending the SPC SOPAC Division Deep Sea Minerals Meeting, funded by the EU, on behalf of his Minister, the Honourable Tom Marsters.

Decades of research of Cook Islands deep waters by overseas scientific expeditions has shown that the Cook Islands have an abundance of manganese nodules with a high cobalt and nickel content. They are found between 4500 and 5000 metres depth below sea level.

With a better understanding through information sharing and dialogue experienced during the workshop, that included presentations from deep-sea mining scientific and environmental specialists, Mr. Lynch is now more confident that a sustainable deep-sea mining industry can be developed in the mid to long-term.

He said that the Cook Islands were the first country in the region to enact Seabed Mining legislation, being the Seabed Minerals Act 2009 and are a United Nations Law of the Sea signatory that gives it legal rights over its 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Important steps, he feels, towards securing the benefits of seabed mining for his nation, while setting the required controls on such activities.

While he understands that the actual mining of the seabed in the Cook Islands is some years off, he believes it's important to learn from other pacific nations seabed mining ventures and keep the public aware of the progress made in this seabed mining sector.

"Tourism is our major industry and economic driver, so we need to always protect our

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environment and “clean beach” image. However as shown in this valuable meeting, planned, sustainable and wise seabed mining of our EEZ may prove to be of great benefit to the country into the future.”

Caption: Mr. Paul Lynch