

Korea's Interest In Deep Sea Minerals In The Pacific Region

Written by Administrator

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The surge in deep seabed minerals exploration interests in the Pacific Islands region in recent years has attracted much attention within and outside of the region. This could be the beginning of significant investment in the offshore minerals industry as new players have joined in the search for seabed minerals.

Apart from the region's traditional development partners such as Australia, United Kingdom and Canada, Korea has shown great interest in exploring the potential of these seabed resources for mining.

KORDI (Korea Ocean Research and Development Institute) was well represented during the EU funded Deep Sea Minerals regional workshop that was held in Nadi two weeks ago.

"Six KORDI scientists attended the workshop and it showed the level of commitment Korea has for the region", said Russell Howorth, Director of the SOPAC Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

The Koreans made two presentations during the workshop, the first talk was focused on KORDI's environmental studies for deep sea mining and the second was based on their mineral exploration activities in the Pacific Region. KORDI is known for its innovative research and development in ocean science and technology.

KORDI has been around for sometime conducting oceanographic, geological and environment surveys in places such as the Manus Basin in PNG and the North Fiji Basin within the last decade. KORDI's association with SOPAC can be traced back to more than a decade ago. Dr Howorth said, "This is due to the similar roles these two organizations play in applied marine and geo-sciences and this is an excellent opportunity to re-engage with the Koreans and strengthen that long standing relationship".

In recent years KORDI has been concentrating on surveys in the Lau Basin after the issuance

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of exploration licenses by the government of Tonga in 2008. KORDI Minerals Limited (KML) is the commercial arm of the organisation that caters for minerals exploration with a view of eventual mining of these seabed resources. KML has a country office in Nuku'alofa Tonga.

During a meeting with a SOPAC Team led by Dr Howorth in the margins of the Nadi workshop, representatives of KORDI have expressed their willingness to work in partnership with the SOPAC Division. "We are encouraged by this collaboration prospect and through the DSM Project we will be working very closely with our stakeholders to address some of the key issues that have been highlighted during the workshop", Dr Howorth said.

It is understood that KORDI will soon be granted exploration licenses within Fiji's Exclusive Economic Zones.

Caption: SOPAC Division Director, Dr Russell Howorth, having a meeting with the Korean delegation in Nadi two week ago.