Proposed Workshop on Urban Sea Systems and Law of the Sea Boundary Assessment in the Asia-Pacific Region

11 July 2024

Introduction

The Circum-Pacific Council for Energy and Mineral Resources (CPC) and the Science, Technology, and Resources (STAR) Non-Government (NGO), non-profit organizations are proposing an Asia-Pacific regional workshop on the Law of the Sea (LOS) boundary assessment and Urban Sea Systems impacts. This workshop is being designed to especially focus on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), present new technologies, seek indigenous contributions, and provide new insights that may lead to extending/enlarging SIDS Territorial Seas, Contiguous Zones, and Exclusive Economic Zones. The workshop is scheduled to take place on 18-19 November 2024 in combination with this year's annual STAR Conference to be held in Suva, Fiji 20-23 November 2024. The intent is to update the regional SIDS on the status/application of LOS regarding Urban Seas and how future developments/initiatives, such as deep-sea mining, renewable energy devices, and sustainability initiatives, may beneficially and adversely impact the region. The goal is to ensure that the participants leave the workshop with confidence and knowledge to evaluate their countries' plans for mineral exploitation and how to mitigate impacts. The workshop will also assist STAR in furthering their focus on deep-sea mining.

The workshop will bring together industry, academic, and government entities with an over-arching purpose to focus on security issues directly related to sea-bed mining, including sea-bed wealth, boundaries, development, social/environmental justice, and sovereignty. This will be analyzed/measured in the context of an Urban Sea System model, including boundaries, climate change, and natural disasters, in particular sea-level rise and coastal sustainability issues and impacts, together with a comprehensive summary focused on the next steps and actions.

Organizers' Background

For background, the CPC is an NGO comprised of US national and international industry, government, and academic Directors, headquartered in California whose leadership has been active in Fiji and other western Pacific Islands for over 40 years. This work has included oil and gas exploration,

alternative/renewable energy development, seabed telecommunications route selection and installation support, UNCLOS data collection and advisory, and direct advisory support for fisheries habitat studies.

The STAR Network that was founded in 1984 as a joint initiative between SOPAC and IOC/UNESCO. STAR has met annually for more than three decades in conjunction with the SOPAC Governing Council Meeting. SOPAC provided secretariat support to STAR until its suspension in 2010. STAR was thus established as an independent organization with the general aims of sponsoring an annual meeting in late November that pertains to geological, environmental, and social concerns of SIDS.

Other organizations are being sought to assist and participate in the workshop.

Urban Sea Systems Component

"Urban Seas Systems" are defined as systems including one or more major port cities, the proximal marine sector – an estuary, bay, or sea – and the entire watershed terrane draining into the marine portion. These Systems have become enclaves of industry, depot centers for commerce, and transshipment points that receive and supply raw materials and commodities that underpin jobs and support improved living standards of the populace. Some have been adversely impacted by industry development and dense concentrations of the populace. Others have more pristine conditions that need conservation. Some lie along coastal margins, being adversely impacted from sea level rise. Some are exposed to natural hazards such as volcanoes and earthquakes within tectonically active regions and subjected to the consequences of these and other geohazards. All tend to have impacts and concerns related to indigenous peoples that are now directly involved with planning and participating in all decisions. A few such Urban Seas Systems lie within SIDS and in need of evaluation based on the coming evolution of deep-sea mining and the advancement of LOS. Along with the global increase in population and its atmospheric and oceanic influences, the balancing of resources with the need of societies is critical for sustainable economies, and food/energy security. Under the efforts of the UN Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development, we will focus on Urban Sea Systems as indicators of critical anthropogenic impacts to the global ocean. Therefore, the workshop will address how an Urban Sea System such as those in the Pacific Islands can be evaluated and assessed for impacts and benefits in a sustainable developmental environment.

LOS Workshop Component

Today, the United Nations "Law of the Sea Applications" manages 162 Coastal States' (Coastal and/or International Lakes) Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) Waters (approx. 169,000,000 km^2 (Geodetic),

and up to 88 Coastal States' Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) claimed Waters (approx. 37,000,000 km^2 (Geodetic). Regional Asia-Pacific has some 25 individual States all following the Rules of Procedure outlined in the Law of the Sea Technical Guidelines. The workshop will offer the latest updated status for 16-25 Asia Pacific States' LOS applications, for (1) Territorial Sea Baselines (2) Legal Maritime Limits (3) Maritime Boundaries (resolved and/or unresolved) and (4) ECS Submissions (United Nations (CLCS)) with specific analysis on current Seabed Resources (i.e. Seabed Mining and Gas Hydrates and/or new (future) potential areas of Interest), including summarizing current status, and what is still to be completed. Of particular interest and potential urgency will be the recognition of any recent or near-term impacts related to Global Climate change and sea-level rise, and the urgency Coastal States' need to finalize work on planned Territorial Sea baseline creation. Globally, this specific subject and concern has become a primary driver in accelerating the process to get the work done to complete all LOS applications.

Planned Outcome of the Workshop

- Definition and application of the Urban Seas concept – Suva, Fiji as an Example
- Well defined UNCLOS policies and procedures including a detailed analysis of the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise when calculating and modifying a claim.
- Recommendations and identification of remedial processes related to coastal resilience and coastal protection in support of UNCLOS claim, including current applied examples from other global coastlines and nations.
- Update on understanding and current projected benefits related to seabed minerals within the boundaries.
- Application of social/environmental justice, bridging the gap between society, science, and justice.
- Development analyses for transport and refining of offshore metals and minerals in relation to Urban Seas Systems within the Pacific Islands region.
- How SIDS can address secure resources and energy needs.
- Abstracts of talks and a complete report will be available within six months of the conclusion of the workshop.

Workshop Outline

Delivery –Introduce Urban Sea Systems concept and indicate how this relates to the LOS, deep sea mining/mineral development and all aspects of coastal development including physical, economic, human. Deliver interactive capacity-building training on the determination of baselines, delineation, and

declaration of the outer limits to maritime zones and the delimitation of maritime boundaries in an era of climate change and sea level rise.

Engagement – Consult, engage, and interact with participants to inform understanding of key challenges and response options (through breakaway interactive mapping exercises).

Strategy – Strategize on how best to apply solutions in practice for SIDS.

Tentative Program

Day 1

Introduction: The Threat of Sea Level Rise to Baselines, Limits and Boundaries

Keynote Address: What are Urban Sea Systems?

Session 1: Major Urban Sea Systems in the Asia-Pacific region

Session 2: Considerations of natural and anthropogenic hazards within Urban Sea Systems

Session 3: Urban Sea Systems in relation to LOS and industry engagement – energy and economic factors

Session 4: Baselines, Limits and Boundaries under the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea -updates and neutral external SIDS-by-SIDS review of "LOS Status Quo"

Session 5: Managing & Mapping the Coast: Determining the Location of Changing Baselines

Session 6: Practical Exercise in Constructing Baselines Model – New insights in determining resource potential and security.

Session 7: Applying Emerging Technologies to the Determination of Baselines, mapping, and siting new energy harvesting devices.

Day 2

Keynote Address: Legal Certainty and Stability in the Face of Sea Level Rise: Trends in State Practice and International Legal Developments concerning Baselines, Maritime Limits and Maritime Boundaries – Independent Review and New Insights

Options for Fulfilling Deposit Requirements under UNCLOS

Session 8: Potential secure energy sources for SIDS – What's Available, What's Emerging

Session 9: Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries in an Era of Sea Level Rise / Overcoming Geographical Complexity and Uncertainty in Maritime Boundary Delimitation

Session 10: Social/Environmental Justice, what it means, how to apply, and relation to SIDS – Indigenous History and Participation

Session 11: Urban Sea Systems in relation to LOS, industry engagement and SIDS' participation

Recap – Participants input.

Closing Comments.

Potential Workshop Partners and Participants:

- SPC
- SPREP
- MFAT (NZ)
- DFAT (Aust.)
- Representatives from Pacific Island Countries
- Other Regional Stakeholders