

DSCC intervention

Agenda Item 11 of the meeting of the Assembly: Commemoration of the 25th Anniversary (3)  
Commemoration of ISA's 25th Anniversary

26 July 2019

Madam President,

We welcome the opportunity to join you and others to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Authority. As we have indicated previously, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has sounded the alarm on the state of planetary biodiversity and ecosystems, warning of the impending extinction of a million species. IPBES identifies the alteration or loss of habitat, in addition to climate change and other factors, as responsible for the threats to our planet's biodiversity. We are increasingly recognizing that we are in the grip of a biodiversity emergency as well as a climate emergency which we ignore at our peril.

The ISA has served a critical role since its inception to ensure that unregulated exploitation of the international seabed does not occur. As the 1994 Part XI Agreement and 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement showed, and as the BBNJ negotiations currently underway have underlined, the Convention is not a static instrument. It is, and must be, responsive to scientific, technological, political and environmental developments.

Scientists are now warning that deep-sea mining, as currently envisioned, is likely to cause irreversible loss of biodiversity, an issue we have consistently highlighted in our interventions and side events here at the ISA over the past several years. Last year, 50 NGOs endorsed a submission to the ISA calling for a process to investigate the fundamental question of whether there is a need for deep seabed mining and its long term consequences for the planet and humankind and, in the meantime, to end the granting of contracts for deep-sea mining exploration and to not issue contracts for exploitation.

As others have noted, there are calls for a moratorium on seabed mining unless and until the environmental, social and economic risks are comprehensively understood, effective protection of the marine environment can be ensured, and biodiversity loss can be prevented. These include calls from NGOs, the European Parliament and the European Union's Long-Distance Fishing Fleet Advisory Council, calls also echoed by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Oceans as noted by the African Group in Council earlier this year. These are not unreasonable concerns nor unreasonable calls.

The UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are globally important commitments, including SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns and SDG 14 on oceans, including Target 14.2 committing states to restore and strengthen the resilience of marine ecosystems. The Decade of Ocean Science presents an important opportunity for States and the ISA to work with the ocean community to enhance research of deep-sea species and ecosystems and the role of the deep ocean in regulating planetary environmental processes as recognized by the United Nation's First World Ocean Assessment, including the carbon cycle, and to help protect deep-sea biodiversity from the multiple threats posed by climate change, ocean acidification, plastics, pollution and other ocean stressors.

In closing, this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an opportunity for States to pause and reflect. We urge States to think carefully about the direction they wish to take the ISA in the next 25 years. We look forward to a future

in which the international community of nations through the ISA collectively become champions for the enhanced research, understanding and protection of the environment in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole, both for present and future generations.

Thank-you Madam President