



Deep Sea Conservation Coalition intervention to the 21st Session of the Assembly of the ISA

21 July 2015

Mr. President, Secretary General, distinguished delegates and observers. Thank you for the opportunity to speak...

The DSCC is a coalition of over 70 non-governmental organizations worldwide. We have been active for the past 12 years, promoting the effective management of deep-sea fisheries in ABNJ for sustainability and the protection and preservation of the marine environment, consistent with international law, in particular the 1995 UNFSA, the second UNCLOS implementing agreement. We have been active on this issue at the UNGA, meetings of the UN FAO, and most of the RFMOs with the legal competence to manage deep-sea fisheries on the high seas. In the past two years we have begun to work in the issue of deep-sea mining.

For us the key issue at this meeting is the drafting of the exploitation regulations. In this regard, we welcome the statement in paragraph 5 of the Secretary General's report that "the implementation of a comprehensive environmental management plan at the regional level is one of the measures required to ensure effective protection of the marine environment of the Area from harmful effects that may arise from activities in it." As we indicated yesterday in Council, and has been stated by our colleagues from IUCN, Greenpeace and WWF, we would once again like to stress the importance of developing and periodically reviewing Strategic Environment Management Plans, both at bio-regional or area wide scales, as well as across claim areas, and embedding these Plans firmly into the regulatory framework for exploitation.

In addition, we have noted in our briefing to this session of the ISA, copies of which we made available at the meeting of the Assembly last week, that the regulations and their framework must include the following elements:

- Clear and robust conservation and management objectives.
- Transparent and enforceable procedures including access to information, public participation, and review procedures.
- Requirements based on the precautionary and ecosystem approaches and the polluter pays principle, including a liability fund and sustainability fund.
- Mechanisms for liability and redress must be established, and research and other initiatives to promote conservation and sustainable management must be implemented.
- Publicly available, comprehensive, prior environmental impact assessments, based on extensive, high quality, environmental baseline information, and independent review procedures.
- Robust and transparent procedures for reviewing and putting into place effective site specific environmental management plans. Management must be effective, accountable, and transparent with ongoing monitoring, compliance, enforcement measures and transparent review procedures.

Broad stakeholder participation and transparency is essential to the effective development of the regulations. The regulations themselves must be transparent and participatory and any mining activities permitted thereafter must respect the common heritage of humankind and ensure real benefits to society as a whole.

Finally, on the proposal for an Article 154 review we recommend a robust review in light of the increasing workload of all organs of the Authority and would second the recommendations of our colleagues that the establishment of an environmental committee and/or scientific committee of the Council be established. Stakeholder input and participation in the review would greatly benefit the process. We also share the concern raised by our colleagues that if the review were only completed for the 23rd Session of the ISA, it might delay the implementation of improvements to the working methods of the ISA until 2018.

To conclude, Mr President, the impacts of deep-sea mining on the biodiversity and many of the ecosystems of the deep-sea could well last centuries, millennia or longer. We owe it to future generations to proceed with precaution, to obtain the knowledge needed to understand the potential impacts of exploitation of seabed minerals before mining begins, and establish a robust regulatory structure that will ensure the protection and preservation of the marine environment consistent with the common heritage of mankind.

Copies of this intervention, our position paper and other materials are available on our website.

Thank-you