

**IUCN Statement to the ISA Assembly on the report of the ISA Secretary General  
Wednesday 22 July 2015 (final version)**

Thank you Mr. President. Please allow me to echo the congratulations on your election as President of this Assembly.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, observers and Secretariat,

IUCN welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Report of the Secretary General. First I would like to introduce IUCN –also known as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and then I will briefly highlight three issues for consideration by this esteemed body.

Mr. President, IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO Members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development.

IUCN has been actively working on marine issues, including the legal, scientific and management aspects of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, for many years. IUCN also has specific experience in deep-sea ecosystems including through a project funded by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) studying seamount and hydrothermal vent ecosystems of the South West Indian Ocean beyond national jurisdiction, notably in the context of future mineral exploitation.

Mr. President, IUCN would like to reiterate its great interest in the work of the ISA. IUCN stands ready to constructively contribute to the development and implementation of the regulatory regime for the Area based on the principle of the Common Heritage of Mankind.

With respect to the Report of the Secretary General, IUCN would like to raise three issues:

**First**, as part of the draft regulatory framework for deep sea mineral exploitation in the Area, IUCN would urge the ISA to develop a broad environmental management Strategy to set out a vision, principles and frame for systematic environmental protection. Such a strategy could be an important tool to guide research and development of strategic environmental management plans (SEMPs) at the regional level as well as environmental impact assessments and environmental management plans at the contractor level. As noted in a recent article in

Science magazine by Wedding et al on “Managing mining of the deep seabed”, such a strategy could build on the principles and approaches adopted in the Clarion Clipperton Zone Environmental Management Plan, which established, among other things, a regionally representative network of Areas of Particular Environmental Interest. The Strategy could also address site-specific conservation concerns, for example, by incorporating the criteria for describing areas of ecological or biological significance and for identifying vulnerable marine ecosystems as developed by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization respectively. Last but not least, the strategy could provide much-needed certainty for the contractors about the environmental (legal) frame within which they intend to mine for the next 30-60 years. The legal basis for such an environmental strategy has been laid out in detail in a recent article by Aline Jaeckel in the International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law.

**Second**, with respect to the proposal for a periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of UNCLOS, IUCN supports the call for a general and systematic review. The review could provide an important opportunity to address the need for new capacity including scientific and environmental expert bodies as well as additional mechanisms to increase transparency and stakeholder engagement and enhance compliance and oversight. As an important symbol of this body’s commitment to transparency, **IUCN suggests that the official review committee include outside independent experts as well as one or more representatives from stakeholders, including environmental organizations.**

**Third**, IUCN welcomes the Secretary General’s report on activities of the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area. Expanding and sharing an enhanced understanding of the deep sea through marine scientific research is, above all, the most immediate benefit to be derived from the Common Heritage of Mankind. **However it is clear that additional ways to promote and support marine scientific research and build capacity are needed, in particular to advance understanding of regional-scale ecosystem processes and functioning outside areas under contract for exploration or future exploitation.** The Seabed Sustainability Fund, as proposed in the draft regulatory framework, could be an important way to channel funds to such fundamental research.

In this regard, IUCN would like to inform you about the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (called DOSI). DOSI is **an international partnership of experts seeking to integrate science, technology, policy, law and economics to advance ecosystem-based management of the deep ocean.** The scientists in DOSI are committed to assisting the ISA and its Member States for these purposes. The Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative will be convening an open information and planning meeting on Sunday 30 August 2015, in Aveiro, Portugal, to which you are all invited to come. The meeting is part of the Deep-Sea Biology Symposium, the largest gathering of deep ocean biologists for many years.

Mr. President, in closing, IUCN would like to note that the outcome of the ISA's deliberations are critical to the health, resilience and sustainability of our Common Heritage of Mankind. Civil society of today as well as generations to come have a keen stake in what unfolds here.

Thank you Mr. President and distinguished delegates for your attention.

[Summary: IUCN urged Member States of the Assembly to support the development of an overarching environmental Strategy to guide the work of the ISA and the contractors; to launch a transparent and independent review of the regime for the Area; and to establish a Seabed Sustainability Fund and other mechanisms to support fundamental and applied deep sea research and capacity building.]