

Deep Sea Conservation Coalition

Intervention on Assembly Agenda Item 8: Report of the Secretary-General

Tuesday 15 August 2017

Thank-you Mr. President and congratulations on your election as president of the Assembly. We would also like to thank the Secretary General (SG) for his report. As we are last to speak I'll be brief. I'd like to associate myself with the interventions made by WWF and Greenpeace. I'd also like to say we welcome the intervention of Canada on behalf of CANZ in regard to science, the precautionary approach, enforcement and REMPs; the concern regarding transparency expressed by Brazil on behalf of GRULAC (and which Morocco and others raised in their interventions), and the observation of the delegation of Singapore that the observers have been active participants and made constructive contributions to the discussions here at this session of the ISA. I would like to make a brief set of comments in relation to the very succinct and clear summary of the ISA's key responsibilities in paragraphs 2-4 In the SG's report to the Assembly, and the drafting of the exploitation regulations:

Transparency is fundamental to trust and should be a much more integral part of the work of the ISA, including through:

Open meetings of the LTC, [including in relation to the drafting of the environmental elements of the exploitation regulations;]

Making public the impact assessments, environmental information and information on the compliance with, or adherence to, all aspects of the LTC recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of possible environmental impacts arising from exploration;

Ensuring effective participation in, and review of, the substance and outcomes of the workshops held in relation to the drafting of the exploitation regulations.

And fourth, enhancing the capacity of all organs of the ISA with respect to the duty to protect and preserve the marine environment through the establishment of an open and transparent environment committee to provide the ISA with the best possible scientific information available.

In this regard, I would like to add an observation on the recent commentary published in Nature Geoscience by leading deep-sea biologists and others entitled "Biodiversity loss from deep-sea mining". The article puts forward the case that biodiversity loss will be unavoidable if deep-sea mining is permitted to occur; that most mining-induced loss of biodiversity in the deep sea is likely to be permanent on human timescales, given the very slow natural rates of recovery in affected ecosystems; and that the notion that offsets can be used to compensate biodiversity loss in the deep-sea is 'scientifically meaningless'.

This raises a fundamental challenge in relation to the drafting the exploitation regulations in our view, namely:

How much biodiversity loss would the ISA regulations allow or permit? Over what time frame given that in most cases the loss will be irreversible on human timescales? Can limits be placed and enforced to be

sure that the 'allowable' loss is not exceeded? How will the ISA justify the biodiversity loss – e.g. what is the benefit in relation to the common heritage of humankind that would justify the loss of biodiversity in the Area?

Finally I would like to mention that the DSCC will hold a side event on Thursday lunchtime in the delegates dining room and encourage delegations to join us in discussing the above points and related issues.

Thank-you Mr. President.