

**ISA Workshop on the Design and Monitoring of Impact Reference
Zones and Preservation Reference Zones**

Berlin, 27-29 September 2017

Introductory remarks by the Secretary-General

Good morning, let me welcome you to Berlin and let me thank you for participating in this workshop to help the ISA develop criteria for the design and monitoring of impact reference zones and preservation reference zones.

I am encouraged by the turn-out and the level of interest in this workshop. I am sure that to many outside observers, the subject matter of this workshop appears to be highly esoteric, but it seems to me that it is a necessary step to resolve a problem that has been pre-occupying us for some time and to allow us to move forward in preparation for deep seabed mining.

It was in fact identified as a recommended priority action in the last review by the Legal and Technical Commission of the CCZ EMP in 2016. So, I am very pleased that we have been able to convene the workshop before the end of 2017 and I sincerely hope that we will be able to produce clear recommendations at the end of the three days.

The concept of IRZs and PRZs as effective tools for environmental monitoring has been around for a long time. The background is well covered in a note prepared by the ISA's legal office which has been circulated and which I recommend that you read. It makes it clear that over time the concept has become somewhat divorced from what was originally intended. Furthermore, what is currently contained in the recommendations issued by the Legal and Technical Commission is possibly more confusing than it needs to be. The current recommendations also do not reflect the reality of the way in which exploration is being conducted and likely scenarios for exploitation and do not provide contractors with a clear way forward.

We need to bear in mind that IRZs and PRZs are no more and no less than a tool to be used as part of an environmental monitoring programme. They are not marine protected areas and they are not intended as a vehicle to meet broader conservation objectives. Their legitimacy flows from the recognition of a need for monitoring programmes in accordance with UNCLOS and the ISA Regulations, and through the use of recognized scientific methods for such monitoring. Their spatial and temporal extent should therefore be proportionate to their true function.

I expect that by the time you get into working groups you will have a very specific list of questions to consider, but this morning I just want to make a few general points for the workshop to consider.

First, as I have said at previous workshops, including here in Berlin earlier this year, we need to make sure that we are not reinventing the wheel. There is already plenty of good practice from the oil and gas, dredging and mining industry that can be used, and I would particularly point you towards the UK and

Norwegian legislation on offshore environmental monitoring. In many ways, NOAA's programmatic environmental impact statement for deep sea mining of 1982 remains an excellent starting point.

Second, we need to consider what is practical and feasible in terms of the anticipated scale and magnitude of actual mining operations. Whilst we may see multiple mining operations decades from now, it is likely that we will start with only one or two operations. Certainly, as far as polymetallic nodules are concerned, only a small proportion of current contract areas is likely to be mined within the foreseeable future. The mining plan will therefore be a very important document for purposes of environmental management. For example; to help identify opportunities to establish connectivity channels between unmined areas. In this regard, I would like to emphasize the importance of contractors helping all of us to understand the likely magnitude and scale of different mining scenarios as well as telling us what is realistically achievable in practice and commercially as far as monitoring is concerned.

Third, we should not be afraid of going back to basics. There is a great danger of letting the tail wag the dog by looking at the environmental management tools in the recommendations and trying to make them fit. We cannot change the Convention, or the Regulations, but we can change the recommendations. So, we should approach the problem by looking at what we need to achieve, and then considering what are the best methods to deliver that result.

Fourth, and in a similar context, it is important to give clear and consistent guidance to contractors. The current recommendations are not clear either in terms of the objectives and criteria for IRZs and PRZs or in terms of their timing. I think there is a particular problem in terms of so-called 'test mining', where we are not speaking the same language. It is just not realistic to expect full-scale integrated tests prior to commercial operations. Contractors need to tell us what is intended in terms of testing of equipment and components, as well as timing, and how that testing can contribute to understanding environmental impacts. Monitoring requirements should balance scientific needs and cost effectiveness. The value of collaboration should also be considered.

Those are the key points I want to make about this workshop. I now want to take this opportunity to update you with regard to **Environmental Management Plans**.

At the last session of the Authority in August, the Council once again emphasized the urgent need for the Authority to develop EMPs at regional scale in mineral provinces where exploration activities are taking place. This call has also been endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

It is clear to me that delivery of regional EMPs, in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, is absolutely necessary if the Authority is going to fully implement its mandate to secure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from mining operations in the Area. Regional plans will also make an essential contribution to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development".

As a first step, we intend to review the CCZ EMP in light of new developments since the plan was adopted in 2012, as well as new data and scientific information. This should be done during the first part of 2018.

We then need to move ahead to put in place EMPs for other key areas, including the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the cobalt-crust exploration region in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. I hope very much that a start can be made on this in 2018, although I have to emphasize that the Authority faces severe challenges in terms of funding to finance regional plan development, implementation and management. This includes much needed funding for essential scientific work, such as baseline data collection, data standardization and assessment, and funding for periodic monitoring programmes to ensure the effectiveness of EMPs, and the management of associated APEIs, once implemented. Particularly critical is the need to finance the participation of developing countries in developing these regional scale EMPs.

The participation of both the scientific community and the contractors in this work is essential. Indeed, increased exploration activity is essential to better understanding the deep sea environment. I see nothing incompatible, therefore, in proceeding both to develop the regulatory environment and at the same time develop regional scale EMPs. In this regard, the Assembly also emphasized that the highest importance must be attached to the implementation of the Authority's mandate to promote and coordinate marine scientific research in the Area and encouraged me to consider how to engage more effectively with the scientific community and deep sea science projects and initiatives related to the Area.