

15 May 2015

Dear International Seabed Authority,

In January 2014 the European Marine Board launched an **expert Working Group on “Deep Sea Research for Societal Challenges and Policy Needs”<sup>1</sup>**. The Working Group is examining the key societal and environmental drivers confronting the deep sea and to set priorities for future, policy-relevant deep sea research. A Position Paper, to be launched on 1 September 2015 at the Deep-sea Biology Symposium in Aveiro, Portugal, will include recommendations for action in the following eight areas:

1. **Increasing our fundamental knowledge of the deep-sea system**, driving a new era of understanding that will underpin all societal, environmental and economic activities in the deep-sea;
2. **A systemic and strategic approach to assessing drivers, pressures and impacts on the deep-sea** (both anthropogenic and natural induced);
3. **Developing a holistic and cross-disciplinary research capacity for the deep-sea targeted at solutions** (spanning natural and socio-economic sciences);
4. **Funding mechanisms to address knowledge gaps and R&D** e.g. public-private partnerships;
5. **Driving innovation of next generation deep-sea infrastructure and technology**;
6. **Fostering human capacities in deep-sea research** to meet society’s demand for knowledge, goods and services from the deep-sea;
7. **Promoting transparency standards and open data access for all deep-sea activities**;
8. **Deep ocean literacy** to inspire and educate society to value deep-sea ecosystems, goods and services.

In the course of its activities, the EMB Working Group Deep Seas has engaged with industry and wider stakeholders through dedicated consultative workshops. The stakeholders represented industry (deep sea mining, oil and gas, marine biotechnology and deep sea fisheries), civil society (NGO sector) and policy. **A clear and consistent message from these non-science stakeholders was the need for fundamental deep-sea scientific knowledge as the evidence base for establishing baselines, informing Environmental Impact Assessments and monitoring impact of deep-sea ecosystems.**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.marineboard.eu/deep-sea-research>

The EMB supports the work of the ISA to develop a Regulatory Framework for mineral exploitation in the Area, particularly regarding plans to develop guidelines for the preparation and evaluation of an Environmental Impact Statement and an Environmental Management Plan and to engage scientific and technical experts in the process. In its report ***“Developing a Regulatory Framework for Mineral Exploitation in the Area”***, the International Seabed Authority states it is currently operating in a data deficient environment, particularly as regards resource data and environmental data. The lack of baseline data for deep-sea ecosystems identified by the report has a direct bearing on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. **Without underlying data on the distribution and connectivity of marine communities in the deep ocean the EIA process can only provide a snap-shot picture of local impacts.** In other words an EIA for a specific site requires context to understand the true biological impacts it may have.

**The EMB Position paper on deep-sea research will assess knowledge gaps in fundamental deep-sea research and in particular deep-sea ecosystems that are still required to improve baseline knowledge to help inform ecosystem-based management of deep sea resources and regulatory frameworks at European and global levels to foster the blue economy in an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable way.**

Yours faithfully,



Niall McDonough, Executive Secretary, European Marine Board



Alex Rogers, Chair, EMB Working Group Deep Seas

#### **14 members of EMB Working Group Deep Seas**

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