

## **Intervention -- Status of the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and proposed road map for 2022 and 2023 - ISBA/26/C/44**

Mr. President,

The Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI) would like to take this opportunity to express its concern over Nauru's recent triggering of the ISA's two-year rule pursuant to Section 1, paragraph 15 of the Annex to the 1994. Based on current scientific understanding, deep-seabed mining will result in biodiversity loss and irreversible harm to deep-sea ecosystems. To manage this nascent industry effectively, decision-making must be based on comprehensive and robust science.

DOSI's concern deepened following our detailed scientific review of NORI's EIS, which is publically available on the DOSI website. The baseline data needed for an adequate EIS are not yet analysed, making the EIS in its current form grossly incomplete. This resulted in DOSI recommending that the NORI EIS be withdrawn, revised, and re-submitted for re-evaluation once the significant gaps in baseline data are closed.

The proposed roadmap only gives two years to finish the draft exploitation regulations, the associated Standards and Guidelines (of which only a handful have been drafted and still await consideration of stakeholder's comments), the items of the strategic plan, overarching Strategic Environmental Goals and Objectives, define 'serious harm' and associated adverse change, as well as specific criteria to operationalize, measure and monitor it, put in place effective regional environmental management plans, and to gather, assess and take into account the scientific information which should underpin this framework. This will not be possible and will run counter to the precautionary approach, which requires Member States to err on the side of caution.

Furthermore, the proposal of conducting ten weeks of in-person meetings will not only place an unnecessary burden on delegations but would likely result in those already underrepresented continuing to be so, due to high costs of participation and ongoing complications with travel and COVID. Now more than ever, it is important to ensure inclusion and transparency at ISA meetings as decisions related to the common heritage of (hu)mankind will have global implications and all voices should be heard. Ensuring safety and opportunity to attend these meetings are important. We suggest continued hybrid participation with both virtual and in-person options for State and Observer delegations.

To summarize, we highly appreciate all the work that has been carried out to date and acknowledge that the exploitation regulations should be finished as soon as possible. But, at the same time, we know that two years will not be enough, especially given the substantial amount of work required, as well as ISA's duty to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed related activities. Rushing forward within two years will likely result in this mandate being violated.

Thank you Mr. President.