

Excellencies, Distinguished presenters, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be asked to say a few words on the way the ISA uses marine scientific research (MSR) to meet its strategic aims and objectives. The ISA's mandate means that it has to manage activities in the Area – that is the parts of the ocean beyond national jurisdiction. This Area represents 40% of the planet's surface and nearly 60% of the world ocean. This is a monumental responsibility - a responsibility that the ISA undertakes on behalf of all human kind. MSR plays a critical role in enabling the ISA to fulfil its mandate to protect the marine environment and to preserve biodiversity. Central to addressing these principles is the gathering of baseline data by contractors undertaking exploration. To ensure that the data are gathered in a standardised way and using the best available methodologies, the ISA has developed a series of Recommendations which guide what environmental parameters the contractors should gather, how the environment should be sampled and the appropriate methodologies to be used to analyse the resulting data. These Recommendations are developed by the leading experts in deep-sea science. The ISA seeks to harness global expertise to ensure that policy is keeping up with advances in science.

The data that contractors produce are collected in a systematic way and curated by the ISA. The recent development of the ISA's database DeepData fulfils another strategic objective to organise and make environmental data available to a range of audiences. The recent series of workshops introducing DeepData demonstrates the ISA commitment to the overall objectives of data sharing and data interoperability under UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Using workshops, the ISA seeks to use the latest findings from MSR and feed them into policy to support their strategic objectives, particularly the protection of the marine environment. Workshops bring together the necessary critical mass of experts needed to address key issues and challenges of managing the Area. You have heard my fellow presenters talk about the taxonomic workshop which the ISA has recently held. In fact the last one was just the most recent in a series. Taxonomy is the lynch-pin to understanding biodiversity and ecology in the Area. The ISA seeks, by holding such workshops both to harness the latest thinking and also to encourage and stimulate further research which will add to existing understanding but also fill in the gaps in our knowledge.

Expert Workshops are also key in developing Regional Environmental Management Plans. Building on the first REMP developed for the Clipperton-Clarion polymetallic nodule fields in the central Pacific, the ISA has convened a series of workshops to develop plans for the other mineral resources in collaboration with Member States, contractors and international organisations. The process was started in Qingdao with a workshop for cobalt rich crusts associated with seamounts supported by the COMRA and continued with an on-line workshop held a couple of weeks ago supported by the Republic of Korea Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries. For seafloor sulphide deposits a science based workshop was held last November in Evora, Portugal supported by the Government of Portugal and the European Union and will continue with an on-line workshop at the end of this month supported by the Russian Federation and the European Union. By collating all the existing data and knowledge of areas and bringing together the relevant experts, albeit these days virtually, practical regional plans for a sustainable future can be developed. But in addition key gaps in our understanding can also be identified.

Addressing the challenges of managing the Area is a major undertaking. One that the ISA cannot do alone. The ISA actively seeks collaboration and encourages the development of MSR projects which will broaden our understanding of the Area. To that end the ISA is involved in a number of international multidisciplinary MSR projects around the world and has developed partnerships with the relevant UN bodies such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. The ISA's plan for MSR together with its strategic plan demonstrates the organisation's commitment to the UN Development Goals and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

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