



Statement by Reverend Fr. Luciano Labanca, Head of Delegation of the Holy See to the Twenty-seventh Session of the Council of the International Seabed Authority, on agenda item 11, “Draft Regulations on Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area Parts IV and VI and Related Annexes”, 24 March 2022

Mr. President,

Being the first time that the Delegation of the Holy See takes the floor during the work of the Council at this 27th Session of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), please allow me to express my deep appreciation for the important effort undertaken so far in the area of Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment. The frank dialogue and discussions during these days represent a significant contribution towards developing a more detailed mining code. While still a work in progress, it already addresses some important goals, especially through the creation of the informal working groups.

Mr. President,

The Holy See firmly supports a “*responsibilities-based*” approach as the basis for and signature characteristic of all efforts and decisions taken by the ISA. In this regard, our major concern – in the words of our Holy Father Francis – is to “to protect our common home” with a vision “*to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development*” (Laudato Si’, no. 13). This approach cannot overlook the conservation of our oceans with all their biodiversity, and the use of resources in a sustainable manner for the benefit of all mankind.

It is warranted that the working groups give greater attention to the following overarching principles – namely: that the “*resources of the Area are vested in mankind as a whole*” (Regulation 2, a), the “*development of the common heritage for the benefit of mankind as a whole*” (2, b, ix), the “*protection of human life and safety*” (2, d), the “*effective protection of the Marine Environment*” (2, e), the “*application of the precautionary approach*” or principle (2, e, ii), the “*application of the ecosystem approach*” (2, e, iii), the “*polluter pays principle*” (2, e, iv), “*access to data and information relating to the protection of the Marine Environment*” (2, e, v), “[a]ccountability and transparency in

decision-making” (2, e, vi) and providing for “*the prevention, reduction and control of pollution and other hazards to the Marine Environment*” (2, f) – and to their inclusion in all parts of the mining code.

My Delegation supports dialogue, discussion and concrete contributions towards the goal of avoiding any form of conflict of interest, as well as any approach to resource extraction based on the profit of individual parties at the expense of others. In this regard, collaboration between States and research partners is essential in assuring accountability and the timely sharing of all relevant information.

The Holy See also wishes to insist on the promotion of the final goals of the regulator, namely of conservation and sustainable use of the oceans for the common benefit of mankind. The efforts made by all participants in the work of the Authority in the area of protection and preservation of the Marine environment should aim to remove “distractions” that constantly destroy the “*consciousness of just how limited and finite our world really is*” (Laudato Si’, no. 56).

In closing, allow me to reiterate the support and constructive engagement of the Holy See in the work of the Authority, in fostering integral peace and recalling that “*once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims. War always does grave harm to the environment and to the cultural riches of peoples*” (Laudato Si’, no. 57).

Thank you, Mr. President.