

Item 13
ISBA/26/C/12 and addenda

Good morning, Mr President and thank you for giving me the floor.

With respect to this agenda item, Italy first wants to thank the LTC, today represented by its Chair Mr Brekke, for its hard work through these months and for having kept the pace with all the topics entrusted to its evaluation and recommendation. As a fundamental organ in the architecture of the Authority, the LTC has indeed ensured that the most outstanding issues this executive body is required to consider could benefit from its advice.

Italy acknowledges the effective organization that the LTC internally adopted to make sure that its activity could proceed smoothly notwithstanding the limits imposed by the pandemic.

We will limit ourselves to only few observations, which we believe are of a relevance for the next steps towards the development of the regime for the exploitation of mineral resources of the Area.

In particular, we appreciate the development of standards and guidelines which were opened to stakeholders consultation at different times in these months. We assure that we will stand ready to provide our inputs in the future, when required, for the next S&G in line.

In respect to this process, Italy would like to ask for some more details on two aspects. First of all, we understand that some S&G benefitted of the support of external experts, as allowed for by the Convention. However, limited information has been provided on their selection and terms of reference for their work. For the sake of transparency, we encourage the LTC or the Secretariat, as appropriate, to share with the Council relevant information in this regard.

With reference to the next steps in the development of S&G following stakeholders consultation, we really look forward to reading the report of the LTC anticipated to be ready by January 2022.

Let me underline, Mr Chairman, that in this report we expect to find not only substantial but also methodological considerations. More in detail, we expect to read how stakeholders comments have been taken into account by the LTC and how they directed the revision of the relevant S&G.

As already mentioned during these days, let me also reiterate that the approval of S&G should not take place until the DR provisions to which they refer have been agreed upon by the Council. This is to ensure consistency and to avoid different languages when providing contractors guidance on the various aspects of the exploitation of mineral resources.

Referring to the first addendum to the Report, Italy thanks the LTC for the study related to the external report on the potential impact of polymetallic nodules production from the Area on the economies of developing land-based producer States. We acknowledge that in so-doing, the LTC has performed, in compliance with the relevant provisions of the 1994 implementation agreement, the functions of the Economic planning commission. In the light of the huge amount of work of the LTC we really thank the subsidiary organ for this additional effort. Italy takes note of the suggestion to possibly create the Economic Planning Commission, but we do not think that the time has come to consider such possibility at this stage. In accordance with the evolutionary approach and sticking to the 1994 agreement, we consider that it will be appropriate to act in this respect only when the first exploitation plan of work will be presented to the Council.

We further reiterate that the Economic assistance fund to assist developing land-based producers affected by the exploitation of polymetallic nodules shall only consist of payments received from contractors and voluntary contributions.

Italy also has some observations on the Regional Environmental Management Plans, but we reserve to take the floor on that at the appropriate moment.

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Italy once again commends the LTC for its work on the review of the implementation of the REMP for the Clarion Clipperton Zone. We appreciate the update on the scientific data provided in the report. We strongly believe that having regularly updated REMP in place is the best way to implement the precautionary principle, a cornerstone of the activities in the Area. In this respect, we support the view that no exploitation activity shall take place without a REMP in place for the relevant geographical area.

Because of the relevance of the REMP within the framework of activities in the Area we also look forward to having other REMP in place for the prioritized marine areas, in respect to which workshops have taken place in the last months. We expect that even in those regions, a network of Areas of Particular Environmental Interest can be created to effectively protect the marine environment from harmful effects arising from activities in the Area.

In this framework, we support the recommendation to create 4 additional Areas of Particular Environmental Interest in the Clarion Clipperton Zone, in the light of the positive results of their previous institution and with the view to enhance the effectiveness of the overall network.

Mr President, let me also add one last remark, which is more generally associated to the protection of the marine environment and on the implementation of the precautionary approach.

We would like to encourage the LTC to also continue its considerations on developing guidelines for contractors on the identification of Impact Reference Zones and Preservation Reference Zones, as foreseen in the Exploration regulations and referred to in the draft text of the Exploitation code.

We are aware that REMP and PRZ serve different purposes and we are sure that the considerable amount of work of the LTC in these months prevented a deeper analysis of topic. However, since we are approaching the start of deep-sea mining operations, we do believe that having defined guidelines for contractors in the creation of IRZ and PRZ is of utmost relevance with a view to collect and study the effects of exploration and exploitation activities.

Thank you Mr President.