

Speaker: Mrs Marzia Rovere

Item 13 – Operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission

Thank you Mr. President,

Italy thanks the Secretary-General for his accurate report on the future substantive functions of the Economic Planning Commission, the timeline for its early performance as set out in the 1994 Agreement and the financial implications related to the implementation of its tasks and duties.

This is a much-welcomed study, that we read in conjunction with ISBA/24/C/10 on the Functions of the organs of the Authority in relation to the preparation of rules, regulations and procedures on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and the 2020 recommendation by the Legal and Technical Commission to consider the possible anticipated operationalization of the EPC.

In this last regard, Italy is aware that the Legal and Technical Commission has to date performed the functions of the Economic Planning Commission, particularly with respect to a study of the potential impact of polymetallic nodule production from the Area on the economies of the developing land-based producers of metals that were likely to be the most seriously affected. We acknowledge that this has been an additional burden for the LTC, which is nonetheless prescribed under Section 1 of the 1994 Agreement.

As far as the early functions of the EPC are concerned, Mr President, while recognising the critical importance of the Commission within the institutional framework of the ISA, we would like to point out that the establishment of the economic assistance fund to assist countries that have been adversely affected by deep seabed mining is premature at the current stage of development of the deep-seabed mining industry. We remark that, in accordance with the 1994 agreement, such fund shall consist in the amount of money which exceeds that necessary to cover the administrative expenses of the Authority and that only payments received from contractors shall be used for the purpose of the fund. As we are unable at this stage to forecast any possible revenue from deep-sea mining, it would be appropriate to defer any such analysis to a later stage.

Regarding the other task of the EPC recognised as a priority by the LTC, i.e. the review of the trends and factors affecting the supply, demand and prices of minerals that may be derived from the Area, we would like to point out that there is already a remarkable body of literature that continuously monitor and investigate the supply risk of critical minerals and metals, including those potentially derived from the Area. It will certainly be updated at the time of the submission of the first plan of work for exploitation.

Finally, the operationalization of the EPC will imply further institutional costs for the Authority, and we have seen yesterday how much the increase in budget is of concern for many delegations.

For all the above considerations, Mr President, my delegation is of the opinion that at this juncture, it is appropriate to stick to the 1994 agreement and postpone the Operationalization of the Economic Planning Commission after the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation.

In the meanwhile, we believe that the future expertise, composition and size of the LTC could continue to provide inputs and studies on the subject matters, as appropriate, perhaps, through the establishment of ad hoc working groups.

Thank you Mr. President.