

ISA Assembly Agenda Item 9

For delivery 20/21 July

IUCN statement regarding the **Periodic Review of the International Seabed Authority Pursuant to UNCLOS Article 154**

Thank you Mr President for this opportunity to speak on behalf of IUCN regarding the Article 154 Review.

IUCN joins in thanks to the Review Committee, the Secretariat, the consultants, Member States and observers for their contributions to the interim report and the Comments of the Review Committee.

This Article 154 review provides a momentous opportunity to equip this body to transition to an operational role of managing the exploitation of seabed mineral resources. The Authority will need to be effectively equipped to fulfil its august role of trustee acting on behalf of all humankind, including present and future generations.

For this reason, it is important for this body to consider the full spectrum of institutional, procedural and substantive reforms that may be necessary to fully operationalize the principle of the common heritage of mankind. This includes measures necessary to ensure truly sustainable development, enable developing countries to participate, and safeguard the marine environment.

To this end, IUCN would like to highlight five key recommendations stemming from the Comments of the Review Committee and the interim report.

- First, the need for a strategic vision, including an environmental strategy. A strategic vision is essential to enable the Authority to adequately cope with future tasks of administering seabed mining while ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from seabed mining activities.
- Second, in order to fulfil its mandate to protect and preserve the marine environment from the harmful effects of DSM, the Authority will need to have the expertise necessary to ensure effective environmental management. This may require the Secretariat to enhance its expertise on EIAs, ecosystem services and environmental management; the LTC to increase the number of environmental experts; and the Assembly to consider a possible Environmental Committee which can undertake intersessional work.
- Third, the need for clear environmental objectives that can be monitored and enforced. These will be needed to inform the development of strategic environmental assessments, regional environmental management plans, as well as environmental

impact assessments and the ensuing plans of work. Such environmental objectives will help enable the Authority to meet its environmental mandate; and it will enable the contractors to plan their financial and human resources as well as fulfil their obligations in good faith.

- Fourth, the need for continued improvements in transparency and stakeholder participation. The ISA manages the Area and its resources as the trustee on behalf of all humankind. This requires that decisions are made in a transparent manner that considers and reflects the views of all stakeholders. It also means that regional environmental management plans, EIAs, and plans of work should be publically available and open to independent and ongoing review. As noted in the report of the Review Committee, *'transparency should be the general rule and confidentiality the exception.'*
- Fifth (and finally), the need for vastly scaled up funding and support for marine scientific research directed at understanding basic questions of the structure, functions and processes of the deep seabed as well as the water column above. Such research is needed to enable us to understand, monitor and avoid potential harmful impacts of direct human activities as well as the synergistic impacts of ocean warming, declining oxygen levels, and increasing ocean acidification.

In closing, IUCN stresses the fundamental importance of securing the financial resources to develop and implement a strategic plan for fulfilling the Authority's role as trustee on behalf of humankind. A Sustainability Fund that comes into effect only once seabed mining ensues will be vital, but too late to help this body achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. These goals include Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Thank you Mr. President.