



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

29[^] Session of the International Seabed Authority

Meeting of the Assembly

Statement of Italy

Item 8 - Annual report of the Secretary-General
under article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention

Thank You Mr. President,

At the outset of this meeting, allow me to underline Italy's full support to your presidency. I am sure your leadership and words of wisdom will continue to lead this Assembly and bring it to a fruitful conclusion of its works.

I would also like to thank the Authorities and the people of the Host Country for their warm and efficient hospitality. It is always a pleasure to be in this beautiful and hospitable Country.

It is a pleasure to congratulate the Republic of San Marino as the 170th member of the ISA. We will be available to provide all necessary and requested support to allow San Marino to fully participate in the work and activities of the Authority.

Mr. President.

I would like to thank the Secretary General for all his work. I recall Mr Lodge's visit to Italy last June on the occasion of the Symposium organized by the Government of Italy and ISA titled "Blue economy and the role of critical raw materials in the development of sustainable ocean economies". The event brought together all interested Italian Administrations, industrial champions of the Italian maritime economy, start-ups, international scholars and research centers, as well as high representatives from Cook Islands, India, Norway, United States, all of whom we warmly thank for their contributions. It was a very fruitful event that contributed to increase public awareness in Italy about the Authority's role and responsibilities in the Area. It was also an opportunity to discuss science, technology, innovation and capacity development in the deep-sea sectors and the relevance of deep-seabed mineral resources for a carbon-neutral future, sustainable blue economy and the technological solutions that will allow harnessing the mineral resources of the Area while minimizing environmental harm.

Italy's Plan for the Sea devotes a specific attention to deep-sea and underwater activities, and we are working towards the creation in the short term of a national Authority for underwater activities, with the aim of developing all synergies on marine technologies and scientific research.

Mr. President,

The G7 Climate, Energy and Environment Ministers, who met in Turin, Italy, last April committed to actively engage in the development of a regulatory framework on deep seabed mineral exploitation that ensures effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise

from such activities. They reaffirmed their commitment to taking a precautionary approach to potential mining of marine minerals in the Area and they also underlined the need of a robust knowledge basis on deep sea marine environment as a precondition for any future mining permits.

We support of course this declaration.

The ISA guaranteed the development and implementation of a unique, solid and future proofed legal framework for exploration activities. The major indication of such success is that currently no activity in the Area is being carried out outside the legal regime established under Part XI UNCLOS, 1994 Agreement and rules, regulations and procedures of the Authority.

We believe that deep-sea mining should be based on science-based policy and decision-making, on the precautionary principle and on the ecosystem approach. Deep-sea mining should not be authorized until after the adoption of a strong and adequate regulatory framework based on science. In the absence of such strong and adequate regulatory framework, Italy will not support the approval of any plan of work for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.

At the same time, Italy is convinced of the need to fully uphold UNCLOS provisions, without undermining the overall consistency of its legal and institutional architecture. We therefore strongly support the need to continue negotiating in good faith on the text of the Exploitation Regulation in view of reaching a consensus according to the reviewed roadmap.

UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement contain an obligation to negotiate and adopt the Regulation on the exploitation of the mineral resources of the Area. It also includes the founding principles that should guide the Authority in this process. Delays in this process would create a legal vacuum that would be much more detrimental to the environment than a properly regulated deep sea mining. We believe that UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement together with the ISA rules, regulations and procedures provide the tools to prevent the exploitation of the Area from being carried out without respecting the highest standards of environmental protection.

Mr. President,

Italy welcomes the Secretary General numerous activities carried out over the course of this year, including in particular by coordinating marine scientific research in the Area through partnerships and in line with the Marine Scientific Research Action Plan and by advancing the mandate relating to capacity development projects. In this context, we commend the growing portfolio of capacity building activities and the importance attached by the Secretariat to women empowerment.

The 30th anniversary of the Authority represents a milestone of its history, in a moment when, by hopefully approaching the adoption of the Regulations on the exploitation of mineral resources of the Area and the progressive implementation of its institutional architecture, this Organization is transiting to full maturity.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary, the Secretary General commissioned a report that takes stock of the achievements of the ISA in promoting marine scientific research, particularly in the framework of the Action Plan for marine scientific research in support of the UN Decade for Ocean Science. Italy



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is pleased to have been assisting the Secretary-General with the draft of the report and we look forward to its official launching.

We recognize the increased presence of the Authority in the global context and its support to global processes and initiatives. This includes the support of ISA in advancing SDGs as well as the participation of ISA in the Intergovernmental Conference on the 2023 Agreement. We look forward to the side event this evening about the contribution of the ISA to the implementation of the objectives of the 2023 Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. Italy is proud to have contributed to the group of experts that drafted the report.

Italy attaches great importance to the training of new generations and in particular women in deep-sea science and is therefore proud of the selection of the project Women in Blu proposed by the National Research Council. We look forward to work in cooperation with the Secretariat to set up a call for application that can recruit the most motivated women from developing Countries. We count also on the valuable collaboration with the ISA joint training center in Egypt to reach out the widest audience and give a chance to women to expand their possibilities to pursue a career in deep-sea science

We are also proud of the contribution Italy is providing to the Authority through investments in the European Consortium for Ocean Research Drilling program (ECORD), the funding of the European Joint Programming Initiative - Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPIO), with particular reference to the action on “Ecological Aspects of DeepSea Mining” as well as with the letter of cooperation with the National Research Council signed last year.

Finally, Italy is honored that an Italian expert has taken up a mentorship role in the “See Her Exceed”, the “S.H.E mentoring program”. We commend the program and look forward to the achievements of the first batch of mentors and mentees. We also encourage stakeholders of the ISA to support the program to allow for its expansion.

In this regard, we welcome the signing of two Memorandum of Understanding in the African region with the Egyptian National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries for the establishment of a Joint Training and Research Centre and with Cameroon for the creation of the African Academy for Deep-Sea Diplomacy, as approved during the 28th session of the Assembly. We look forward to enhancing cooperation and bolstering capacity development in marine scientific research, in particular in Africa where cooperation in the field of the Blue Economy can represent a valuable tool for transfer of technology, job creation and economic partnership as provided by the Mattei Plan for Africa.

Thank you Mr. President.