



**Item 18: Ensuring adequate scientific understanding to support informed decision-making.
Delivered by Patricia Esquete on 31 July 2026**

Thank you Mr President,

DOSI welcomes the draft decision proposed by Vanuatu and particularly supports the recognition that informed decision-making depends on a scientific evidence base that is sufficient, independent, robust, transparent and accessible.

These qualifiers are relevant. **Sufficient** refers to the minimum of satisfactory or acceptable quality or quantity of data. It is important to note, that in the case of the deep ocean, the best available scientific evidence may simply not be enough. **Independent**, because it should serve a common purpose, and respond to the questions that need to be answered collectively. In this sense, we would like to clarify that data, knowledge and confidence are not the same thing. The question is whether the available scientific evidence provides the understanding and the level of confidence needed to support informed decision-making.

For example, decades of observations from the deep ocean allow us to conclude, with high confidence, that recovery from disturbance in abyssal ecosystems is extremely slow, even though many of the ecological mechanisms involved remain poorly understood. Conversely, large amounts of data collected from a single contract area or from one mining test may provide detailed observations, but they cannot be confidently extrapolated across regions, ecosystems, or to full-scale commercial operations over relevant timescales. Nor do they provide the fundamental understanding of ecosystem functioning and natural variability that is required for decision making.

Scientific uncertainty is therefore not merely the absence of data. It is also the uncertainty about ecosystem processes, interactions, and our capacity to understand cumulative effects, and our capacity to apply management tools like defining ABMTs or thresholds appropriately. These are the types of uncertainties most relevant for environmental management. Ensuring adequate scientific understanding is therefore not about reaching a determined quantity of information. It is about ensuring that the available knowledge is sufficient, relevant and reliable for the decisions that the Authority is being asked to make.

DOSI therefore welcomes this initiative by Vanuatu as an important effort to identify priority scientific knowledge gaps and to strengthen the scientific basis for decision-making. We also emphasise that maintaining an open, transparent and independent dialogue between the Authority and the scientific community will remain essential as this work progresses.

Thank you.