

IUCN Statement
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Mr President,

On behalf of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), I congratulate you on your election as President of the Assembly. I also extend our sincere appreciation to the outgoing President Ambassador Dwight Gardiner for his leadership. IUCN thanks the Madam Secretary-General, Leticia Carvalho, and the Secretariat for their dedication in supporting the work of the Authority, and the host country Jamaica for their warm hospitality.

Mr President,

As the global authority on the status of nature and the measures needed to safeguard it, IUCN remains committed to supporting Member States and the Authority through independent science, international environmental law and evidence-based policy.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea places the effective protection of the marine environment at the heart of the Authority's mandate. As discussions continue on the future governance of activities in the Area, that objective should continue to guide all aspects of the Authority's work.

Science must remain central to those discussions. The recent update of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ included assessments of deep-sea molluscs endemic to hydrothermal vents.

These assessments demonstrate both the extraordinary biodiversity of the deep ocean and the remarkable advances that continue to improve our understanding of these unique ecosystems.

Yet they also remind us of something equally important: science is not static. Our knowledge continues to evolve, and so too must our governance.

The latest assessments found that 62 per cent of hydrothermal vent endemic mollusc species assessed are threatened with extinction due to the potential impacts of deep-sea mining, including the remarkable scaly-foot snail. As new evidence emerges, it should continually inform environmental standards, management measures and decision-making.

The Union calls for such scientific developments to be taken into consideration under the ISA's Activities in the context of the Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research, and in the broader framework of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

This principle was reinforced by the 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, to which IUCN experts contributed, affirming that an effective regulatory framework presupposes adequate scientific information on the state of the marine environment.

Last Saturday, IUCN, together with Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy and Oceano Azul Foundation, convened the second edition of the Deep Sea Dialogues, bringing together scientists, legal and economic experts, policymakers and civil society to explore these issues in a neutral, inclusive and non-negotiation setting. We warmly invite delegates to join us tomorrow evening for a report-back on the key messages from those discussions.

Mr President,

Throughout this Assembly we have heard thoughtful, principled and often passionate interventions from Member States. While perspectives differ, there has been one shared understanding: the importance of protecting the marine environment and ensuring responsible stewardship of the Area.

Each of us in this room holds a privilege that carries an equally great responsibility. Few institutions are entrusted with shaping the future of the largest ecosystem on our planet and managing the common heritage of humankind.

Future generations will judge not only the decisions we make, but whether we made them with humility, transparency and the best available knowledge.

Consistent with IUCN World Conservation Congress Resolution 122 (2020), the Union continues to support a moratorium on deep-sea mining unless and until the conditions set out in that Resolution have been met.

As stated by late Kristina Gjerde in this room; “The New rules of governing the deep sea mining must take its full costs to society and the environment into account”.

We also need to engage all levels of society to weigh any potential value of deep sea minerals against the unavoidable loss of living systems in the deep.

IUCN stands ready to continue working with Member States, the Secretariat and all stakeholders to ensure that decisions taken today safeguard our shared ocean heritage for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr President.