

**Aid to Discussions on
DR 44ter on Strategic Environmental Goals and Objectives**

Wednesday --- 22 July 2026 --- 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Friends of the President Group (led by Germany)

The Friends of the President (FoP) Group on DR 44ter met intersessionally on 19 May 2026 with a total of approximately 50 participants over two meetings. Germany as Facilitator submitted the report on the outcome of intersessional work for the FoP Group to the Secretariat on 15 June.

The report provides textual proposals for DR 44ter and summarises key discussion points from the intersessional period in text boxes.

For the Council discussion during the July meeting of the 31st Session of the Authority, we ask delegates to speak to the guiding questions below and indicate flexibility and red lines to allow us to move forward.

We also indicate three suggestions as Facilitator that reflect previous discussions in the FoP Group and are designed to move towards convergence on the draft text. We invite views on those suggestions.

Key guiding questions

1. Regarding paragraphs 5 and 6, how should the Authority's Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives relate to other environmental management measures, including REMPs and thresholds?

Based on previous discussions in this FoP Group, the Facilitator suggest the following:

- a) The Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives are high-level in nature and apply to all activities in the Area, irrespective of the resources concerned or the region in which such activities occur. These Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives are intended to remain relatively stable over time and, accordingly, would not require frequent review.
- b) REMPs establish region-specific and resource-specific environmental objectives (as envisaged in the REMP Standardized Procedure, ISBA/30/C/21, paras. 6–7). These operational objectives should be subject to more frequent review, for example every five years, which corresponds to the standard review cycle for REMPs. They serve to support and give effect to the high-level Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives.
- c) Thresholds provide measurable and quantitative benchmarks. Achievement of these thresholds will contribute to the attainment of the operational objectives, as well as the Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives.
- d) Robust environmental management frameworks typically include indicators and targets to further operationalize environmental goals and objectives. It is noted that the Authority does not currently have such indicators and targets in place, nor are there ongoing efforts to develop them. In their absence, thresholds assume particular importance in supporting implementation and assessment.

This hierarchy reflects academic literature, including:

Durden, J.M. et al, 2017. A procedural framework for robust environmental management of deep-sea mining projects using a conceptual model. *Marine Policy* 84, 193–201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2017.07.002>

Tunncliffe, V. et al, 2020. Strategic Environmental Goals and Objectives: Setting the basis for environmental regulation of deep seabed mining. *Marine Policy* 114, 103347. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.11.010>

2. For the Strategic Environmental Objectives in paragraph 4, should examples be included in the text?

Several objectives currently include examples, including paragraph 4(a), (b), (e), and (h). For example, paragraph 4(a) states:

(a) prevent loss of biological diversity, [including but not limited to genetic, species or functional diversity, habitat or community types, and structural complexity];

Some delegation prefer specifying examples to ensure these examples will be considered, whereas other delegations prefer to not specify examples to avoid some examples being given priority. There are three options:

- a) Keep examples in DR44ter but preface them with “*including but not limited to*”;
- b) Move the examples to the relevant definitions in the Schedule;
- c) Move the examples into a standard (noting that it remains unclear whether there will be a standard and/or guideline on environmental goals and objectives).

3. Which version of paragraph 4(e) does your delegation prefer?

4. Which version of paragraph 4(f) does your delegation prefer?

Suggestions from the Facilitator

A. We suggest merging paragraphs 1 and 7 as they overlap in content. Paragraph 1 could then read:

1. In performing their roles and obligations under these Regulations, including in relation to Plans of Work, Contractors, Applicants the Enterprise, the Authority and its organs, and Sponsoring States shall be guided by and implement the Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives set out in this regulation.

B. Regarding paragraph 8 on the review of environmental goals and objectives, during the intersessional period, the majority of delegations seemed to agree that the Strategic Environmental Goal and Objectives should be reasonably static but the regional objectives should be subject to regular review as these are more operational in character.

We therefore suggest deleting paragraph 8 as the review of such regional objectives is governed by the review of REMPs, as set out in the Standardized Procedure in ISBA/30/C/21 (para 27-31). We note that amendments to DR44ter would still be possible via the process specified in DR 107.

C. We propose to capture all points made regarding paragraph 4(j) in two separate paragraphs:

(j) prevent damage to areas of special biological, scientific, archaeological, or historical significance in the Area or the Marine Environment;

(j.bis) protect and preserve vulnerable and unique as well as rare or fragile marine ecosystems;