

Italy's comments to point 9 of the Agenda (Strategic Plan)

Thank you Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate the Secretary General for its very valuable work on the Strategic Plan.

Indeed we are in the process of setting the way ahead in a process which will define a completely new relationship with the oceans and their resources and this Strategy opens a very concrete approach to the future by the Authority.

The Strategy captures large part of the challenges that the Authority has been facing more recently and some specific and delicate areas that will shape the future debate on the exploitation of the seabed resources.

In particular, Italy considers that issues relating to transparency as spelled out in Strategic direction 8, are of utmost importance especially as far as contractors activities, environmental protection, relations with public opinions are concerned. The issue will acquire a growing importance in particular towards stakeholders, public opinion and national decision-makers. Transparency towards public opinion should be considered as a crucial challenge, especially as far as environmental protection is concerned.

Another issue that should be further developed in the framework of the Strategy, also in connection with the issue of transparency, concerns monitoring programmes for deep sea mining activities as indicated in Strategic Direction 3. This will require further discussion, participation and contributions from the membership also in terms of monitoring techniques and environmental risk assessment, such as remote sensing and satellite images, and experience deriving from environmental safety programmes implemented in national jurisdictions. The establishment of a monitoring programme to observe, measure,

evaluate and analyse, on a regular basis, the risks or effects of pollution of the marine environment, as indicated in point i) of the Expected outcomes, should be a priority.

It is also of high importance the stress that the Strategy puts on the promotion of marine scientific and technological research in the Area in Strategic direction 4. In this framework, we believe that means and methodologies to mobilize adequate resources for marine scientific research are fundamental and will need to be further spelled out and planned in the course of this five-year period. In connection to this I am pleased to announce that Italy is in consultation with the Secretariat in view of organizing a Workshop with the title “From offshore oil&gas to deep sea mining” which will aim at exploring the possible relationships between deep sea oil&gas offshore technology and the emerging deep seabed mining industry. The venue identified for this Workshop is the forthcoming 2019 Offshore Mediterranean Conference, which will take place on March 29-31, 2019 in Ravenna, the hub of the offshore industry in the Mediterranean.

In addition to the obvious technological spillovers from the oil&gas sector, the Workshop will also be able to benefit from expertise of management systems and best practices of the oil&gas deep sea drilling sector in minimizing the environmental impacts in an area, such as the Mediterranean Sea, which is a semi-closed basin with high level of endemism of marine species.

Finally, in the framework of the Strategy, we support the request to the Secretary General made in the Draft decision of the Assembly to prepare a high-level action plan including performance indicators and a list of concrete outputs. This will help setting concrete targets and parameters of evaluation, especially in line with the indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 14 on enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, it will also facilitate Member States and the Authority itself in making work plan adjustments, if necessary, and measure the results, in terms of progress, during the five-year period.

Mr. President,

On a different page, I keep abusing your patience to inform the assembly that today our annual contribution to the Authority has been paid. We were indeed shamefully six months in arrears for a few technical problems, but things have been luckily solved and I hope we are now back among the “good ones”