

Belgium

The BE delegation thanks the SG for the improvements made to this document since its presentation in March 2018 and supports the Strategic Plan with some minor but important suggested improvements. We would have welcomed here & there an even stronger emphasis on transparency, public consultation, conservation and precautionary principle regarding the viability of the ecosystem of the marine environment, as illustrated in the following small suggested corrections:

- p.3 - I. Introduction point 4 on guiding principles BE strongly recommends to add:

(d)bis Apply transparent processes with public notification and consultation.

(f)bis Apply the precautionary approach

- p.4 - II. Mission statement point 7 BE strongly recommends to add (indicated in bold):

o line 5 "..., including through the effective protection of the marine environment in accordance with sound principles of conservation and the avoidance of unnecessary waste, and contributing to ...

o line 13 at the end of the section: In addition, sufficient protected areas are also established where no exploration or exploitation is permitted.

- p.5 - The need for exploitation regulations point 11 BE strongly recommends to change:

o line 10, at the end : replacing "to make the transition" by "to ensure a sound regulation for".

- p.9 - Strategic Direction 2.1 line 3, BE recommends to add (indicated in bold) "... on the basis of best available information, public consultation and in line with ..."

- p.10 - Strategic Direction 3.2 line 3, BE strongly recommends to add at the end of the sentence: ..., to ensure sufficient protection of the deep seabed's habitats and biodiversity.

- p.10 - Strategic Direction 3.4 BE strongly recommends to change "to assess the potential for activities in the Area to interfere with the ecological balance of the marine environment." to "to assess the potential risks of activities in the Area to interfere with the ecological balance of the marine environment."