

Intervention by India on 26 February 2019 on Agenda Item 11 - REMPS

Thank you Madam President.

The document ISBA/25/C/04 prepared by the Secretariat has brought lot of clarity on the issue of legal validity of Regional Environmental Management Plans. Though this not legally binding document it may be noted that this is the policy of the council and is important in the context of health of the oceans. Our delegation supports the clear recommendations of the Qingdao workshop and we are of the opinion that similar decisions are to be taken for other mineral resources and regions like Indian Ocean which are equally important. REMPS are effective means of ensuring long time sustainability in terms of biodiversity of the region and health of the oceans. But REMPS need to be established with sound scientific data. LTC deliberated these issues in 2010 and issued initial guidelines in 2012. These guidelines need to be reviewed to see if the sufficient scientific data are added regarding various mineral resources are concerned. But as these are not legally binding the REMPS should not be an impediment for the mining operations that have been approved. So far the contractors have been very responsible. However in the absence of approved REMPS the contractor may have to come out with their own plans as it happened in the case of polymetallic nodules where there were no set EIA procedure in place before adoption of nodule regulations in 2000. Therefore, Contractors were forced come out with their own assessment and there are non uniformities in the individual assessment plans of the contractors. As the methodologies adopted are different it is difficult to compare EIA datasets.

Our delegation feels that it is an urgent requirement that council ask LTC to work on REMPS and if necessary more workshops may be organised about the status of the scientific data sets provided by the contractors. The contractors may be informed about the more scientific data that is required. It may be remembered that data come from the hard work of the contractors.

It is important for the council to come out with clear guidelines regarding the REMPS for all the regions of mineral resources.

Thank you Madam President