

IUCN statement on: The relationship between the draft regulations on exploitation in the Area and regional environmental management plans (REMPs) ISBA/24/C/4

Thank you Madame President. As this is IUCN's first-time taking the floor, IUCN would like to join others in congratulating you, Madame President, on your election.

IUCN has appreciated the rich discussion today on the important role of REMPs in ensuring effective protection of the marine environment. IUCN would like to make five brief points.

First, IUCN would like to add its voice to Algeria, Germany, Belgium, Italy, France, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, Brazil, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji and others in stressing the need to make the existence of REMPs a precondition for consideration of an application for a plan of work and to make the REMP objectives, targets and associated standards directly binding on contractors as part of their obligations under any approved plan of work. As highlighted by Pew, a plan of work for exploitation should not be approved unless the contractor is able to comply with these goals, objectives and associated environmental indicators and measures.

Second, IUCN notes that as highlighted by Algeria and Federated States of Micronesia, REMPs are essential but need to be based on global goals and objectives to ensure a replicable and transparent pathway and strategy at the regional level. As underscored by Germany, it is also important that REMPs are able to complement global and regional ambitions for networks of marine protected areas. The UN BBNJ process is particularly important in these regards.

Third, as observed by Germany, REMPs need to be complemented by prior strategic environmental assessments to understand what environmental features are present, their status and present and emerging stressors in conjunction with global and regional environmental goals and objectives. IUCN notes that such an assessment needs to be done in light of other uses, activities, interests and conservation priorities in the region. As noted by FSM, it is important to include potentially affected states as core partners in planning and participating in such work for the reasons eloquently outlined by FSM.

Fourth, IUCN joins with others including the DSCC on the need for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into all the work of the ISA, and for ensuring that REMPs are in place prior to the granting of any future exploration contracts where they do not already exist.

Fifth and finally, Madame President, IUCN welcomes the news of the upcoming workshop in Pretoria, South African to develop guidelines for developing REMPs, and welcomes Germany's offer to host a meeting to explore the wider aspects of REMPs. As noted by many, such workshops are an important part of a transparent and inclusive process involving all stakeholders including potentially affected states, regional organizations, users—including the cable, fishing, shipping and scientific communities, conservation organizations, and as noted by Canada, indigenous peoples and local communities -- in the development of REMPs. We hope that such transparency and inclusiveness will permeate all of ISAs work as part of its objective of acting in the interests of humankind as a whole.

Thank you Madame President.