

25 July 2019

IUCN remarks for the 25th Anniversary Special Commemorative Session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority

Madame President,

Thank you for providing IUCN the opportunity to speak. IUCN would like to direct our remarks to the three questions posed by the Secretariat in preparation for this Special Commemorative Session.

First, what are the Authority's key achievements over the past 25 years? The Authority has brought stability, hope and science. Stability in that all recognize that mining in the Area must be conducted in accordance with the rules, regulations and procedures laid down by UNCLOS, the Part XI Agreement and the Authority. Hope that any mining that is allowed to proceed pursuant to these rules will bring demonstrable benefits to humankind as a whole. And science that is raising our collective awareness of the fragility, vulnerability and importance of the deep sea to maintaining life on planet Earth, facts unknown to the drafters of the Part XI Agreement just 25 years ago.

Second, where do you see ISA in 25 years' time? In 25 years, IUCN sees the Authority as being in the forefront of a 20-year international research programme to explore, understand and learn from the deep sea and shed light on the potential interactive effects of mining and climate change. After applying the precautionary principle to require evidence that deep sea mining will not cause harmful effects, the ISA will have launched networks of International Deep Sea Space Stations to build global science capacity for the benefit of humankind as a whole. This new focus will save the IUCN Redlisted species of Scaly Foot Snail¹ (known from only three hydrothermal vents in the Indian Ocean) from the threat of extinction, and enabled inventive scientists to apply this species' unique genetic resources to build iron-clad heat-proof armor to protect firemen and firewomen around the world.

What is IUCN's message to ISA on its 25th Anniversary? IUCN's message is a mix of both congratulations and caution. The Authority, led by its Member States, can be rightly proud of becoming a respected international institution capable of acting as a guardian of the Area and its resources on behalf of humankind. At the same time, IUCN suggests that only by acting cautiously today, and not rushing the adoption of the exploitation code, will we be able to wisely manage the full riches of the deep sea on behalf of present and future generations.

Thank you Madame President.

For further information, IUCN invites you to watch a short video: Seabed Mining: A Precautionary Approach available on YouTube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtjZ53YiCCs>>.

¹ Sigwart, J., Chen, C. & Thomas, E.A. 2019. *Chrysomallon squamiferum*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2019: e.T103636217A103636261. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-2.RLTS.T103636217A103636261.en>.