

Thank you President.

New Zealand would like to join others in thanking the members of the article 154 Review Committee for their work and for this final report, as well as the Secretary-General for his comments and action taken so far.

New Zealand has consistently emphasised the need for all organs of the Authority to work in the most efficient, effective manner possible and for ongoing consideration to be given to improvements to the Authority's working methods.

We agree with many of the recommendations set out in the report and think their implementation will bring about a number of improvements.

In particular we would like to highlight the need identified for further environmental expertise in both the Secretariat and the LTC as the Exploitation Regulations are developed. Here we would express our support for recommendations 6, 11 and 14. In general, we think that further consideration needs to be given to improving the balance of necessary expertise within the LTC and assisting in the effective management of its heavy workload. We would support additional days being added to the LTC's meetings.

We would also stress the need for greater openness and transparency in the working of the Secretariat, the LTC and the Authority as a whole. We think both the Council decision on LTC priorities and the development of the Authority's strategic plan are positive steps in this regard and look forward to discussing the draft plan next year. We think that it would be useful for this plan to include the environmental aspects of the Authority's work.

We would encourage further consideration to be given to holding open meetings of the LTC, as set out in recommendation 16, particularly on the consideration of the Exploitation Regulations, given that sensitive commercial information will not be discussed in these meetings. We support the comments made by delegations over the past few days about the need for greater openness and transparency in the convening of and participation in workshops relating to the Authority's work. We also agree with recommendation 18, that non-confidential information should be shared as widely as possible and support the development of a database to facilitate access to this information (recommendation 3). Consideration should be given to whether documents such as preliminary Environmental Impact Assessments should be made public.

We agree with the Review Committee's assessment that the current scheduling of meetings makes it difficult for Member States to engage in detail on recommendations and documents that come from the LTC. We would strongly support the suggestion in the report that there should be a gap between the meetings of the LTC and the Council and stress that any additional Council meetings should be as required for the development of the exploitation regulations, particularly given the financial concerns raised by a number of delegations.

Finally, we are aware that an ongoing issue is increasing Member State attendance at annual meetings. We would continue to encourage that consideration be given to convenient meeting times when many States will be able to attend, the need to ensure that the Council and Assembly are efficient in their work, and the ability to conduct some work by electronic means.