

Speaker: Mrs Marzia Rovere

Item 14 – Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission

Regional environmental management plan for the Area of the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge with a focus on polymetallic sulphide deposits

Thank you Mr. President,

Italy wishes to congratulate again the chair of the LTC for his report and to acknowledge again the impressive pace at which the LTC has performed its work to progress on such an important matter, as it is the development of a new REMP.

Regarding the revised document of the REMP for the Area of the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge, we noted with appreciation the inclusion of the detailed description of the sites in need of protection, which is important to better assess the level of base knowledge assembled by the LTC to develop the REMP and to identify the most critical areas in terms of geological and biological features.

However, concerning the structure of the REMP itself, we are not aware of the changes and revisions made in this revised version in response to the stakeholder consultation conducted in June this year. It would be of great interest and importance for Italy to understand the process that the LTC uses to leverage from the additional knowledge and feedback that is provided during a public consultation. A stakeholder consultation should be regarded as a real opportunity to acquire new information, benefit from external and different thinking and therefore improve the process of development of such a strategic policy document in an inclusive and transparent manner.

The information about the incorporation or rejection of stakeholders' comments would be considerably helpful for reviewing the current document and for understanding how to respond to the next consultation in the most effective way.

For example, we note that a mechanism by which experts would collaborate with the Commission for addressing the different knowledge gaps has not been established, as we have suggested in our comments to the first draft of the REMP. We believe that calling for experts for every single identified gap in knowledge would be more time consuming and ineffective compared to identifying since the beginning of the development of the REMP a pool of experts or a committee with specific, varied and

recognized understanding of the area of interest. This mechanism closely relates to the proposal of having a committee of experts that work together with the Commission, as proposed by Germany, Netherlands and co-sponsored by Costa Rica. This is not absolutely to undermine the role of the Commission, as provided by the Convention, or to strip the Commission of competence and authority, but to really help the Commission to execute their mandate. The Commission will always remain the supervising body but will be assisted and supported by experts in a more structured and replicable way.

As a decision on the draft standardized procedure for the development, review, and approval of Regional Environmental Management Plans has not been adopted due to mixed comments received this morning, we therefore question the opportunity to approve the REMP of northern Mid Atlantic Ridge in its current form. We believe the current structure represents a great basis but needs further considerations in line with the standardized approach for the REMP development that will be reformulated by the LTC after having received comments to be provided by January 15, next year.

In particular, we wish to mention the need to have annual reports on the new knowledge acquired in the area of a REMP both by contractors and the scientific community that can constrain the review process of a REMP itself and provide update on the need to change the level of protection of certain areas, as scientific discovery and understanding progress in time.

In summary, as other delegations have already suggested, we prefer to delay consideration of this document until the Council has agreed upon guidance for REMP development and content.

Thank you Mr President