

Reg. 44bis - Belgian intervention

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Thank you Madam Facilitator,

First of all, Belgium supports the principle and the wording of this Regulation. The REMP is a *conditio sine qua non* for the consideration of an application for a Plan of Work. As you might recall from our opening statement, Belgium has added another essential condition for the consideration by the Legal and Technical Commission of an application for a Plan of Work. I hereby quote:

Finally, Belgium would like to recall that the member states of the United Nations have committed to sustainably manage all areas beyond national jurisdiction, and above all to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. For Belgium, it is crystal clear: 30% of the ocean must be protected qualitatively before we can approve any plan of work for exploitation.

Unquote

The long awaited 'BBNJ Agreement' has finally been adopted. Yes! We applaud all States that have been contributing to this spark of multilateralism in these difficult times. But now is the time to implement the Agreement. To paraphrase the famous words by the much respected Singaporean Chair of the conference in New York: 'The ship is setting sail to leave the port for its next journey'. Therefore, Belgium is of the strong opinion that we first need to know and decide which oceanic areas shall be given more protection, via the so-called area-based management tools, before we can consider activities that will have a harmful effect on the marine ecosystem or on parts of it. As reflected in the opening statement, we want to concretize the threshold for consideration via the 30 by 30 condition, as adopted during the last CBD conference in Montreal. We know by now quite well where potential contractors want to develop exploitation activities, but we know very little about the areas we want to more intensely protect. In order to restore that balance, we first need to implement the BBNJ Agreement towards the 30 by 30 threshold, and then, only then, we will be able to live up to the precautionary principle and to consider plans of work.

Hereby, we make a text proposal to integrate this in the draft Regulations, as a paragraph 2. With our apologies for being too late to integrate the proposal in the Facilitators's text. It reads as follows:

2. The Commission shall only consider an application for a Plan of Work if the implementation of the agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and the sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction has led to the adoption of area-based management tools on 30% of the area beyond national jurisdiction, in accordance with article 19 of this Agreement.

This should go along with a new title for the Article. E.g. 'Regional Environmental Management Plans and BBNJ Agreement'.

We of course welcome suggestions on other Articles to accommodate this condition, or on wording.

Thank you, Madam Facilitator.