



28[^] Session of the International Seabed Authority

Assembly

Item 8 and 8B

Statement of Italy

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General
Honourable Minister
Distinguished members of the Secretariat
Distinguished delegates

As I take the floor for the first time, let me congratulate Mr. President on your assignment: I am sure your leadership and words of wisdom will continue to lead this Assembly and bring it to a fruitful conclusion of its works.

I would also like to thank the Authorities and the people of the Host Country for their warm and efficient hospitality. It is always a pleasure to be in this marvelous country.

I would like to thank the Secretary General for all his work and his kind words addressed to my country. I recall Mr. Lodge's visit **to Italy last May**. It was a very fruitful visit that contributed to increase public awareness about the Authority's role and responsibilities in the Area. Let me also thank all the staff of the Secretariat for its hard work and for making all of this possible.

Let me also welcome **Rwanda** as the latest member joining the ISA.

Italy welcomes the Secretary General's 2023 report. We **appreciate the numerous activities carried out by the Authority over the course of this year**, including capacity development projects, and the efforts of the Secretariat **to ensure transparency** in its work at all levels.

Italy would like to highlight the **contribution this Organisation is providing to achieve the 2030 Agenda** and we acknowledge the independent review commissioned in 2021 which recognizes that ISA already contributed to 12 of the 17 SDGs, as recognized also at UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon last year.

We recognize the efforts of the Authority in promoting and encouraging marine scientific research in the Area and its role in the implementation of the goals of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030. A wealth of studies have improved our knowledge of the deep-sea in the last few years, thanks also to the collaboration between the Authority, the contractors, the international scientific community. Nonetheless, the deep seabed is home to a massive reserve of biodiversity that still needs to be explored. While research has

made considerable progress in the past 40 years, it is still difficult to assess all potential damages caused by exploitation activities on the seabed.

Italy supports the need to **foster interdisciplinary cooperation not only within ISA, but also with other UN bodies, Member States and International Organizations**, and consistently with the BBNJ process, to advance in the understanding of such an unexplored environment. In this regard, we welcome the **cooperation agreement signed last May by the Secretary General and the Italian National Research Council** to promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area and disseminate research results. In particular, the cooperation will aim at:

1. strengthening the deep-sea related knowledge and capacity of developing Countries, including Small Island Developing States, to support their strategic development goals;
2. developing joint capacity building programmes on deep-sea related matters and joint project
3. elaborating and implementing activities in support of women's empowerment in deep-sea research such as the Women in Deep-Sea Research Project

In this framework, we look forward to the development of a technology roadmap, which we expect to examine later this year, and we count on it to further support informed decision-making processes and bolster sustainable development practices concerning mineral resources, particularly on environmental preservation and monitoring of activities conducted in the Area.

As other delegations stressed already during the meeting of the Council, **we consider of great importance the Authority's efforts to facilitating technological innovation and activities**. We therefore support the initiatives of the Secretariat aimed at strengthening research capabilities and training of developing and technologically less developed States in the techniques and applications of research in the Area. We also strongly support the work of the Secretariat on women empowerment and leadership in ocean affairs and Marine Scientific Research.

Under this backdrop, Italy underlines the **importance of ensuring a high and ambitious level of environmental protection of the deep sea from activities in the Area**, in line with the objectives of sustainable development. We maintain as a priority the need to minimize externalities of exploitation activities on the environment and the transfer of costs to society, including in an intergenerational perspective.

In line with these principles, Italy has consistently maintained that **deep-sea mining should be based on science-based policy and decision-making, on the precautionary principle and on the ecosystem approach. Deep-sea mining should not be authorized until after the adoption of a strong and adequate**



regulatory framework, which prevents harmful effects to the marine environment, creates effective tools of risk mitigation, provides adequate inspection and monitoring mechanisms and ensures transparency in processes and outcomes of deep-sea activities. In the absence of such strong and adequate regulatory framework, Italy will not support the approval of any plan of work for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area.

At the same time, Italy is convinced of the **need to fully uphold UNCLOS provisions, without undermining the overall consistency of its legal and institutional architecture.** We therefore strongly support the need to **continue negotiating in good faith on the text of the Exploitation Regulation** in view of reaching a consensus.

UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement contain an obligation to negotiate and adopt the Regulation on the exploitation of the mineral resources of the Area and the founding principles that should guide the Authority in this process. **Any delay would create a legal vacuum that could make the Area vulnerable to unilateral actions.** We believe that UNCLOS and the 1994 Agreement together with the ISA rules, regulations and procedures provide the tools to prevent the exploitation of the Area from being carried out without respecting the highest standards of environmental protection.

Italy believes that the **International legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)** should work as a guidance for future negotiations within the Council and that the Authority and its member States should continue and increase efforts in filling the gap in scientific knowledge of the deep-sea ecosystems.