

Thank you, Mr. President,

Mr. State Minister, distinguished excellencies and delegates, dear colleagues

We note the presence of Minister of State Alando Terrelonge of Jamaica and we would thus like to reiterate our thanks to the Government and to the wonderful people of Jamaica to host us this week.

Furthermore, Switzerland would like to join others in welcoming Rwanda as the newest member to the ISA family.

Please allow me to use this opportunity to deliver some general comments.

- Switzerland is committed to UNCLOS and to the protection of the environment, which includes the fight against climate change, biodiversity protection, and the sustainable use of natural resources. In this context, the protection and conservation of our oceans are essential. We are committed to make all efforts to achieve the environmental objectives the international community has committed to. Our work here should be done in coherence with other relevant international processes.
- Switzerland acknowledges the challenges caused by the expected growth in the demand for metals and minerals, in particular for the energy transition. We agree that mining the deep sea is an activity provided for under UNCLOS – but not unconditionally and not at all costs.
- The deep sea hosts some of the most pristine and diverse ecosystems on Earth, including fragile marine ecosystems, with a very large diversity of unknown organisms. There is mounting scientific evidence that deep-sea mining would have harmful and potentially irreversible impacts on marine ecosystems and could threaten the global climate cycle.
- At the same time, we still have major gaps in our understanding of the deep sea. We lack the necessary environmental baseline data to understand and manage the implications and cumulative impacts of deep sea mining. We also lack robust instruments to monitor the impacts. How can we protect what we don't know and manage what we cannot measure?
- Furthermore, harmful and potentially irreversible impacts could make other economic uses of the deep sea difficult or impossible, such as fishing and access to unique genetic resources that may hold valuable secrets for the development of life saving pharmaceuticals.
- Therefore, Switzerland has taken a clear position in favor of a moratorium on the commercial exploitation of the Area. Switzerland is of the view that deep-sea mining in the Area must be postponed until there is better scientific understanding of its impacts and until the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects of such activities can be guaranteed.
- This position is fully in line with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. The ISA has the mandate to “act on behalf of and for the benefit of humankind as a whole” and “to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from the harmful effects of mining activities”. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, the precautionary approach must be applied. Under UNCLOS, States have the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment. Economic interests from a few cannot outweigh a lack of effective environmental protection.

- We urge all Members of the Authority to base their decisions on scientific evidence and strictly apply the precautionary approach for the benefit of current and future generations.

Now to the matter at hand: We have read the Secretary-General's annual report with interest and would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for preparing this comprehensive and extensive report and for all their work during the last year.

- With appreciation, we have taken note that the Secretariat has started discussions in preparation of a MoU to formalize the cooperation with the International Labor Organization with headquarters in Switzerland. International standards on human health, safety and conditions of work should be adhered to on board all vessels used for activities in the Area. In this regard, we call on all member states who haven't done so to consider ratifying the Maritime Labor Convention. We further invite the Secretariat to also formalize its cooperation with the International Maritime Organization responsible for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.
- We also note with appreciation the work that has been done in regard to promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the area. Scientific knowledge is indispensable for the ISA mandate to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities in the area. We call on the Secretariat to continue and intensify its work in this regard.

And finally to the discussion of the supplementary agenda item for the Establishment of a general policy by the Assembly related to the conservation of the marine environment:

- As a proponent of a Moratorium, we support a decision by the Assembly not to approve exploitation work plans until more scientific knowledge is available and until RRP's are adopted that can effectively protect the marine environment. We thus call on all Member States to accept a discussion on the supplementary agenda item proposed by the Republic of Chile and others.
- The Assembly is the supreme organ of the Authority and should be allowed to discuss such an important issue. This is of particular importance, since the Council has so far rejected most discussions in this regard, with the justification that its main and priority mandate is to finalize draft regulations.

Thank you, Mr. President