



Intervention

01. November 2023

Thank you, Madame Facilitator,
Good afternoon dear delegates,
and thank you for giving the Environmental Justice Foundation the floor,
This intervention is also on behalf of the DSCC, Greenpeace, Oceans North, the Ocean Foundation, and WWF,

Our ocean is the origin of life and vital for our survival. But in recent decades we have imposed more and more anthropogenic stressors on it – and acted as if the healing power of the ocean is infinite. Regulation 59 is emblematic of a problematic approach to environmental protection, as it assumes to simply restore biodiversity and ecosystems once they are gone. In the case of deep-sea ecosystems, science has repeatedly demonstrated that restoration is not technically or economically possible.

What is more, as France alluded to, exploitation contracts may last for 30 years with several ten year extensions. It therefore seems very difficult to ensure that the contractor will still be in a position to carry out any activities after that period. Already today, regulators struggle to hold oil companies responsible for removing oil drilling infrastructure from decommissioned sites, which imposes large costs on the respective governments as the regulatory bodies.

Life in the deep sea is characterized by unparalleled fragility and vulnerability. No Closure Plan can leave exploited areas 'in a healthy status' or ensures a mined site will 'return to its natural state'. What we will be left with instead is an environment degraded for generations to come.

The Environmental Justice Foundation is convinced that even the best intended strong environmental regulations developed with caution and in good faith will at this time not be sufficient to protect the marine environment and will not do justice to art. 145 of the Convention.

We ask you therefore: How could we expect that a new exploitation industry will not do harm to an environment of unparalleled fragility – regardless of how strong environmental regulations will be? Deep-sea mining introduces light in darkness; noise in silence; toxic heavy metals in nearly untouched waters; it removes habitats and smothers organisms; it brings one of our most destructive industries to an environment which has, until this day, barely experienced any human activity at all. In light of the current available technology, it seems impossible that any regulatory measure other than pushing the pause button will be able to protect and conserve the natural resources of the Area and prevent damage to the flora and fauna in the deep sea.

Nothing but a moratorium can satisfy the crucial mandate to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects from deep-sea mining. And only a moratorium will guarantee alignment with other international commitments and treaties, such as the High Seas Treaty or the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Finally, in this context, we welcome the statement made by the United Kingdom at the beginning of this meeting calling for a moratorium on deep-sea mining.