



**Item 10: Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment. Topic for discussion: Environmental Compensation Fund**

Thank you Madam Facilitator,

This intervention is on behalf of WWF, Environmental Justice Foundation, Greenpeace and Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

WWF would like to emphasize a critical aspect of your commitment under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), specifically regarding the protection of the marine environment. UNCLOS, while comprehensive in its framework, does not merely include provisions for compensation for environmental damage; rather, its primary focus is on the prevention and protection of the marine environment from such harm.

Central to this obligation is the precautionary principle enshrined within UNCLOS. This principle mandates that if there exists uncertainty regarding the impacts of an activity on the marine environment, and if adequate measures to prevent harm cannot be assured, then said activity should not proceed. This principle underscores your collective responsibility to prioritize the safeguarding of our ocean above all else.

Member States of the International Seabed Authority, it is incumbent upon you to ensure that deep seabed mining does not commence until there is sufficient scientific understanding of its potential impacts and that the world has found ways for those impacts to be prevented. You must not allow mining activities to proceed in the absence of such knowledge, as doing so would contravene your obligation as State Parties to UNCLOS to protect the marine environment.

Moreover, it's essential to distinguish between protection and compensation. While compensation may address the aftermath of environmental harm, it cannot replace the imperative of proactive protection as mandated by UNCLOS. Your focus must remain steadfast on preventing harm rather than seeking remedies after the fact.

Furthermore, you must acknowledge the limitations of our current understanding of the deep sea. The concept of restoration, which is mentioned as a future possibility in various places throughout the regulations, is not currently feasible given the complexities of deep-sea environments. The ISA cannot reasonably base its decisions on unsubstantiated hopes that restoration may become an option someday in the distant future. Therefore, your foremost objective must be the prevention of damage rather than relying on the notion of restoration.

In conclusion, let us remember that the goal of UNCLOS is not to gauge how much damage we can inflict upon the ocean and subsequently compensate for it. Instead, it mandates you to uphold your collective duty to protect the marine environment upon which we all depend. This is why the only way forward is a moratorium on deep seabed mining, prioritizing deep-sea environmental protection, ensuring that your actions today do not compromise the health and integrity of our ocean for generations to come.

Thank you.