



**Workshop on the development of a regional environmental management plan for the Area of the Northwest Pacific**

**Tokyo, Japan**

**19 February 2024**

**OPENING REMARKS**

by

H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge,  
Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

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Mr. Ichiro Takahara, Chairman & CEO of Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security,

Mr. Hiromasa Oba, President of Deep Ocean Resources Development Co., Ltd.,

Distinguished representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you this morning to this international workshop on the development of a regional environmental management plan – or REMP – for the Area of the Northwest Pacific.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea places a duty on the Authority to adopt and implement all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from activities in the Area.

Such measures include the suite of rules, regulations and procedures developed by the Authority to manage the activities of contractors but can also include other measures and tools designed to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment. One of the most important tools we have at our disposal to achieve this objective are the regional environmental management plans.

The first EMP, for the Clarion Clipperton Zone, was adopted by the Council of the Authority more than 10 years ago, in 2012. The impetus for that REMP came from a proposal to design, using the best available science and scientific information, a representative network of habitat types in the CCZ that could be set aside and used as reservoirs to preserve biodiversity in the region. It became apparent that this could not be done in isolation, without an understanding of the state of the marine environment and biodiversity

throughout the CCZ and a comprehensive management plan outlining proposed implementation steps, research objectives, and other activities need to achieve specified goals set out in a plan.

Over the years, the Authority has implemented, reviewed, and improved the CCZ EMP. It was further reinforced in 2022 when the Council adopted a recommendation from the Legal and Technical Commission, based on newly available data and sound scientific analysis, to expand the existing network of Areas of Particular Environmental Interest from 1.44 to 1.97 million square kilometres in size.

REMPs are now recognized as the most effective area-based management tool available for managing activities in the Area to achieve the conservation and sustainable use objectives set out in UNCLOS.

It is therefore on this premise that the Council emphasized the need to develop REMPs in all areas where mineral exploration contracts have been approved. As a result, this has become a major programmatic activity for the Authority, implemented with support and expert guidance from the Legal and Technical Commission.

Between 2018 and 2022, the Authority convened seven expert workshops with international partners to advance work on REMPs in the Northwest Pacific, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and the Indian Ocean. Around four hundred international experts participated in these workshops. For one of these regions – the Mid-Atlantic Ridge – the Commission adopted and submitted a final draft of the REMP to the Council in 2022.

At the same time, the Council has requested the Commission to develop a standardized process for the development and review of REMPs.

It is in this context that we are meeting today to discuss the development of a REMP for the Northwest Pacific.

This workshop is a continuation of work started in Qingdao, China, in 2018, which was followed by a virtual online workshop in 2020. The key objectives today are to build on previous discussions, review newly available data and scientific information, and on this basis, update or further strengthen the scientific basis for the REMP.

We are quite fortunate in that four contracts for exploration for cobalt-rich crusts and one contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules have been granted in this region, starting from 2014, and a great deal of progress has already been made in terms of collection and analysis of data from resource and environmental surveys. In this regard, the contribution of contractors to the REMP process has been and will continue to be critical.

Thanks to our partner organizations and experts who attended the previous two workshops for this region, considerable progress has also been made in terms of synthesizing scientific information, developing

methodologies for identifying areas in need of protection, and creating a model for assessing cumulative impacts.

With this, I am sure that we can make particularly substantial progress this week.

To sum up, REMPs are an essential contribution towards the implementation of the environmental objectives set out in UNCLOS. They are fully consistent with a precautionary approach to the management of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. Our experience also shows that REMPs can incentivize collaboration in marine scientific research and contribute towards the progressive improvement of our understanding of the marine environment of the Area, as well as our collective capacity to manage global commons.

Now the most important task I have this morning is to thank all those who have contributed to the organization of this workshop.

My thanks go first to our hosts, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and JOGMEC, as well as Deep Ocean Resources Development (DORD) and the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST).

I also wish to thank Duke University and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) for their technical support to the workshop.

I wish to especially acknowledge and congratulate Dr Malcolm Clark and Dr Tomohiko Fukushima, both members of the Legal and Technical Commission, for accepting to co-chair the workshop. Special thanks also to other members of the Commission Dr. Se-Jong Ju, Dr Sissel Eriksen and Dr. Becky Hitchin for their significant contribution.

I wish you a fruitful discussion and look forward to the outcomes of the workshop.

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