



OPPOSITION TO DEEP-SEA MINING GROWS BUT GOVERNMENTS FAIL TO BLOCK DESTRUCTIVE INDUSTRY

MEDIA RELEASE

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Deep-sea mining negotiations close in Kingston, Jamaica, today as concern surrounding the controversial industry reaches an all time high. Civil society calls on governments to raise their ambition and establish a moratorium on the industry.

The Deep Sea Conservation (DSCC), representing over 100 non-governmental organizations from around the world, have been present in Kingston during negotiations from 16-31st March, advocating for a halt to the emerging industry in the face of the multiple environmental, social and economic risks that surround the industry.

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) are meeting intensively in 2023 with the aim of agreeing and adopting deep-sea mining regulations, after Nauru triggered a legal loophole in July 2021 known as the “two-year rule” on behalf of Nauru Ocean Resources Inc, a subsidiary of Canadian company, The Metals Company. This loophole means that States must finalize and adopt regulations for deep-sea mining within 24 months or else consider ‘provisionally’ approving applications for mining licenses submitted after the two year deadline.

The DSCC’s Policy Officer, Emma Wilson stated: *“As humanity faces up to the converging biodiversity and climate crises, we must strive for a more sustainable future for people and planet and tread more lightly on our planet. This means saying “no” to the inevitable destruction of ecosystems and industries that we do not need and do not want.”*

The ISA Council’s 28th session has seen progress towards a pause on the controversial industry with Vanuatu joining calls for a halt. They join Palau, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Panama, Samoa, Germany, Costa Rica, Chile, Spain, Panama, Ecuador and France supporting a pause, moratorium or ban.

At the same time however, the member countries of the Council hotly debated but failed to agree on a procedure to handle applications for provisional licenses after the two-year deadline expires on 9 July this year. The arcane and complex rules of procedure adopted in the early 1990’s only require 12 countries to vote yes to approve a mining license even if the other 24 member countries of the Council are opposed.

Over the last two weeks, the ISA Secretariat itself has also faced multiple controversies surrounding its transparency and processes. The ISA Secretary General, Michael Lodge, has faced reports of abandoning neutrality by State delegations; civil society and scientists observing negotiations were threatened with the removal of their accreditation for filming in the negotiating room; journalists were removed and barred from negotiations and Greenpeace had billboards removed and were threatened with the removal of accreditation by the Secretariat.

The DSCC’s International Legal Advisor, Duncan Currie commented: *“These negotiations have made it abundantly clear that there is a deeply entrenched pro-mining agenda within*

the ISA Secretariat and the ISA is not fit for purpose. It must be reformed so that it truly acts for the benefit of humankind as a whole.”

The ISA Council are due to meet again from 10-28 July, when the two-year loophole expires, for a Council and Assembly meeting that could prove crucial in the race to defend the deep.

The DSCC’s Campaign Lead, Sofia Tsenikli commented: *“If rules and regulations are adopted, this would signal the start of the largest mining operation in the history of humankind in one of our planet’s most fragile environments. [Scientists warn](#) us that if the industry were to go ahead, it would cause widespread permanent damage to our ocean, including destruction of ancient ecosystems, species extinctions and also risks disturbing critical carbon storage in the deep. A moratorium on deep-sea mining is the only way forward.”*

All ISA member countries are legally responsible under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to ensure that any deep-sea mining permitted by the ISA does not cause “harmful effects” or “damage to the flora and fauna of the marine environment”. The DSCC’s Co-Founder and Political Advisor, Matthew Gianni, said: *“The ISA’s decision-making procedures are bizarre and profoundly undemocratic. 131 of its 167 member countries, have no vote when it comes to the ISA deciding whether to approve or disapprove applications for seabed mining licenses. And even on the 36 member Council, a minority of countries can ensure that a company obtains a license, even if the majority are opposed. It beggars belief, and underscores the need for a moratorium until the ISA can be reformed to fulfill its legal obligations to “act on behalf of” and “for the benefit of” all humankind.”*

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About the DSCC

The DSCC is made up of over 100 non-government organizations, fishers organizations and law and policy institutes working together to protect vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems. We aim to substantially reduce the greatest threats to life in the deep sea and to safeguard the long-term health, integrity and resilience of deep-sea ecosystems.