NEW ZEALAND CALL FOR A MORATORIUM ON DESTRUCTIVE DEEP-SEA MINING IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS

DEEP SEA CONSERVATION COALITION REACTION
For immediate release 27.10.22

Just days before the International Seabed Authority meets in Jamaica, seeking to continue the rush to mine the deep, New Zealand joins the growing wave of concern, declaring its support for a moratorium on the risky industry.

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) welcomed the news from New Zealand, with Phil McCabe, Pacific Lead for the Coalition commenting: “We applaud Aotearoa New Zealand for taking a position that reflects the values of New Zealanders and ocean people everywhere. This call echoes our domestic experience as well, where seabed mining has been shown to be environmentally, socially and legally unacceptable. New Zealand now joins others taking a leadership role internationally to defend our shared ocean from destructive deep-sea mining.”

Next week, the International Seabed Authority’s member States will meet in Kingston, Jamaica for two weeks, to negotiate deep-sea mining rules and regulations that, if agreed and adopted, could see commercial extraction begin in the deep sea as soon as 2023.

In the statement released this morning, New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nanaia Mahuta highlighted that the Clarion Clipperton Zone, the area targeted for the first commercial deep-sea mining in international waters, contains “some of the least understood ecosystems on the planet, and our scientific knowledge of it remains extremely limited.” Nanaia Mahuta also warned that “deep-sea mining could cause irreversible changes to this environment and have a significant impact on its biodiversity.” The Minister of Foreign Affairs also underscored the need to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment, calling for increased knowledge about the deep seabed, and the impacts of deep-sea mining.

The DSCC, which represents more than 100 non-government organizations, will be present in Jamaica throughout negotiations, calling for a moratorium on the industry. The Coalition’s Campaign Lead, Sofia Tsenikli said: “New Zealand’s call for a moratorium on deep-sea mining sends a clear message - States must regain control of the process at the ISA or see deep-sea mining fast-tracked and the ocean wrecked. It’s time now for all States to join the path set by Pacific countries including Palau, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa and now New Zealand, and press pause on deep-sea mining.”
The emerging industry is facing a surge in backlash from a broad spectrum of society, including governments, almost 250 parliamentarians from more than 50 countries, scientists, businesses, civil society organizations and communities across the world. More than 600 science and policy experts have called for a pause on the nascent industry, warning that the proposed strip-mining of vast areas of seabed risks disturbing carbon storage in the deep, and would result in a loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning that would be irreversible on multi-generational timescales.

The DSCC’s Legal Advisor, Duncan Currie commented: “If deep-sea mining in international waters were to begin, there would be no going back. New Zealand needs to take forward this leadership and ambition to the upcoming ISA meeting and beyond, to rally further political support to stop deep-sea mining before it starts.”

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**
- New Zealand’s position specifically refers to deep-sea mining in international waters, under the control of the International Seabed Authority.
- Over the last decade the New Zealand government has faced three legal tests for seabed mining in its national waters under the Exclusive Economic Zone & Extended Continental Shelf Act (EEZ & ECS Act). The first two tests were rejected outright by the government regulator, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and the third was roundly rejected through a succession of courts all the way to the Supreme Court. New Zealand’s seabed mining applications in national waters drew opposition from a broad spectrum of society including, Iwi, coastal communities, environmental groups, ocean user groups and fishing interests.
- The DSCC will be calling for a moratorium throughout the upcoming ISA Council Meeting in Jamaica and at the UNFCCC COP27 in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt.
- New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is in Antarctica this week celebrating advancements in scientific knowledge and affirming New Zealand’s commitment to the protection of Antarctica as “a natural reserve for peace, science and cooperation.”
  - Antarctica was saved from mineral extraction at the 11th hour by the Madrid Protocol, effectively banning mineral extraction on the continent 30 years ago on the eve of its opening to mining

**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. The DSCC holds that there
should be a moratorium on deep-sea mining; the adoption of seabed mining regulations for exploitation and the issuing of exploitation and new exploration contracts until the environmental, social and economic risks are comprehensively understood and it can be clearly demonstrated that deep-sea mining can be managed in such a way that ensures the effective protection of the marine environment and prevents loss of biodiversity.

Spokespeople available for comment
- Phil McCabe +34 625 991 442 philmccabe101@gmail.com
- Duncan Currie +64 21 632 335 duncanc@globelaw.com
- Sofia Tsenikli +30 6948941052 sofia@savethehighseas.org
- Emma Wilson +33781611715 emma@savethehighseas.org

For media enquiries, please contact
  Patricia Roy +34 696 905 907 patricia@communicationsinc.co.uk