



**AS HISTORIC BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK IS AGREED AT CBD COP15 IN MONTREAL,
CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS ON WORLD LEADERS TO DEFEND THE DEEP**

DSCC Media Reaction

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The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) challenges governments to protect the ocean from top to bottom in the wake of the new COP15 Biodiversity Framework, by calling for a stop to deep-sea mining and a ban on bottom trawling on global seamounts.

The new biodiversity framework demands vital action to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems, and commits governments to protect at least 30% of Earth's surface, including the global ocean, by 2030. To ensure we preserve the systems that sustain us, the DSCC joins calls for the remaining 70% to be effectively managed to prevent biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. This would mean that destructive activities - including deep-sea mining and bottom trawl fishing on seamounts and vulnerable marine ecosystems - would not be allowed. Target 15 of the new biodiversity framework adopted today also calls for nature disclosures for businesses, ensuring that companies disclose risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity.

The DSCC welcomes the COP-15 'Decision' on marine and coastal biodiversity calling for the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to better understand the risks to life in the deep sea and ensure that no harm to marine biodiversity and the environment would occur, before permitting deep-sea mining to go ahead. The ISA has already issued licenses to explore for minerals in 1.5 million square kilometers of seabed, an area more than twice the size of France, and is considering whether to begin licensing commercial operations as early as July 2023. Scientists have repeatedly warned that biodiversity loss would be inevitable and permanent if the ISA were to allow deep-sea mining to begin.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, an international agreement that establishes a legal framework for all marine activities, member countries of the ISA are obliged to ensure the effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects and to prevent damage to deep-sea life. The decision adopted by COP-15 strengthens this obligation and echoes the broader commitment to halt and reverse biodiversity loss worldwide. Ten years ago, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) similarly committed States to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of the ocean and marine ecosystems and biodiversity.

The DSCC's Co-Founder Matthew Gianni has been present in Montreal throughout negotiations and commented: *"It is vital that governments live up to these commitments and obligations, and take action to prevent biodiversity loss in our planet's largest biome, the deep sea. It is difficult to imagine that the nations of the world would collectively and knowingly agree to open up a whole new frontier of ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss and species extinction by permitting large-scale industrial mining in the deep-sea given these commitments. But unless they agree to a moratorium at the International Seabed Authority it could well happen - and there would be no turning back."*

During the final week of COP-15, the DSCC and partner organizations together with the governments of Chile, Costa Rica, France, Germany, New Zealand, Palau, Spain and Vanuatu co-sponsored an event. There, ministers from the eight countries met for the first time to discuss joint efforts to promote a 'precautionary pause' or moratorium on the development of deep-sea mining at the ISA and called on other ISA member countries to join them.

In a parallel development, during COP-15 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (on 9 December) calling on high seas fishing nations to urgently take action to prevent damage from deep-sea fishing to vulnerable ecosystems found on seamounts and in other areas of the high seas, "recognizing the immense importance and value of deep-sea ecosystems and the biodiversity they contain."

The DSCC's Global Seamounts Campaign Lead, Bronwen Golder said: "*Now is the time for action. The new biodiversity framework underscores the critical need to defend fragile deep-sea ecosystems and the rich web of life they support. By supporting a ban on bottom trawling on seamounts and other vulnerable marine ecosystems at upcoming meetings of the South Pacific and North Pacific high seas fisheries management organizations, governments can turn words into action on the water.*"

The UN's first and second World Ocean Assessments highlighted bottom trawl fishing as the greatest threat to seamount ecosystems. However, fishing vessels from New Zealand and Japan continue to bottom trawl on seamounts and oceanic ridge systems on the high seas in the Pacific, degrading or destroying areas recognized as biodiversity hotspots where coldwater corals, sponges and other deep-sea habitat forming species - many of which can live for hundreds to thousands of years - are known to occur.

"With the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress just six weeks away in Vancouver, Canada, there is an opportunity for countries to start to implement the Kunming-Montreal Agreement immediately. The targets need to be met by 2030 and we are on the cusp of 2023. We are hopeful that Canada will move from words to action and join the growing number of countries calling for a deep-sea mining moratorium in international waters, announce a moratorium in its own waters and be the first country to protect all seamounts," said Susanna Fuller, VP Conservation and Projects at Oceans North.

The DSCC calls on countries to adopt and fully implement the COP-15 commitments through supporting a moratorium on deep-sea mining in the upcoming negotiations at the ISA in March, and by banning bottom trawling on seamounts and other vulnerable deep-sea marine ecosystems both individually and through the regional fisheries management organizations where they are members.

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