

Honourable Minister Melanie Joly, Global Affairs Canada
Honourable Minister Joyce Murray, Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
Honourable Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, Natural Resources Canada
Honourable Minister Steven Guilbeault, Environment and Climate Change Canada

26 January 2023

Call for Canada to announce a moratorium on deep-sea mining at IMPAC5

Dear Hon. Minister Joly, Hon. Minister Murray, Hon. Minister Wilkinson, and Hon. Minister Guilbeault,

We are writing to you on behalf of 39 international and national environmental non-governmental organizations, including the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) which comprises 108 non-governmental organizations, to follow up on a letter sent by the DSCC dated 20 October 2022 entitled “Appeal to take a stand against deep-sea mining at next ISA Council meeting.”

As noted in the previous letter, the deep sea is the largest living space on Earth, making up 90% of the marine environment. It plays a vital role in keeping our planet healthy by absorbing and storing vast quantities of carbon dioxide and heat emitted into the air by human activity. The deep sea is also one of the most biodiverse areas of our planet, with new species being discovered every time we explore. However, the deep sea is facing multiple environmental stressors, including pollution and climate change. Now there is a new and unnecessary threat on the horizon: deep-sea mining.

With this letter, we are reiterating our original appeal to prevent deep-sea mining in international waters and asking for domestic action as well. Following the successful conclusion of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Agreement, where Canada’s leadership was foundational to reaching agreement on new targets for biodiversity protection, Canadian leadership will continue to be needed over the next several months as countries work toward protection of the deep sea - one of the world’s last remaining wilderness areas.

Canada’s hosting of the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) on 3-9 February 2023 is a significant opportunity for further Canadian leadership on protecting marine biodiversity and limiting climate impacts. We are asking that:

- 1) Canada announce a moratorium on deep-sea mining within its own waters, given that there is no legal regime to undertake this activity and no current plans to do so; and,**
- 2) Canada join other countries, including Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Palau, Panama, Samoa and Spain, in their support for a moratorium or precautionary pause in international waters.**

As a global leader, Canada has an opportunity to prevent deep-sea mining from receiving the green light at the International Seabed Authority (ISA) this year. Both the scientific community and many private sector actors have made clear that deep-sea mining does not currently have their support. Key reasons include:

- **Irreversible biodiversity loss:** The science consistently demonstrates that if deep-sea mining received the green light, it would cause [irreversible, widespread environmental damage](#) throughout our ocean, along with species extinctions. Over [700 scientists](#) are calling for a “pause to deep-sea mining until further rigorous scientific information concerning the biological,

ecological and connectivity of deep-sea species and ecosystems, as well as the ecosystem services they provide is completed.”

- **Climate impacts:** [Deep-sea mining risks disturbing the world’s largest carbon sink](#), thus rendering the activity incompatible with efforts and commitments to address the climate crisis, including the [UN Sustainable Development Agenda](#), the 2015 Paris Agreement and the 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact from COP26.
- **Stark regulatory challenges:** Due to a provision known as the “two-year rule” that was triggered in June 2021 at the ISA, deep-sea mining could begin in our ocean as soon as June 2023. The ISA is rushing to negotiate a regulatory framework. However, as a consequence of the two-year rule, deep-sea mining could proceed regardless of regulations being agreed by States. This would open a new industry with minimal regulations and oversight in the largest and least understood biome on the planet, overseen by a body (the ISA) which is characterized by a number of [inherent flaws](#) that point to the need for institutional reform. Additionally, allowing deep-sea mining to occur before the treaty on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction is completed and in force is premature.
- **Rapidly developing alternatives:** Ambitions to mine the deep sea are increasingly out of step with the metal economy and supply chain. There have been rapid developments in the technology and circular economy sectors that offer an expanding set of [alternatives to reduce demand](#) for virgin metals and avoid opening a vast new extractive frontier.

At this critical moment, when our planet faces the twin crises of biodiversity and climate change, deep-sea mining is not a solution. It is not needed, it is not wanted, and it is not worth the risk. Either we continue on a path of destruction or we begin to take the right steps that allow us to live in harmony with nature. Over the past year, we have seen numerous governments take tremendous strides to protect, conserve, and restore our ocean at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, UNFCCC COP27, CBD COP15, and at the ISA itself. This momentum must be continued in 2023. Canada must step into its natural role as a global leader in this space.

We would be happy to provide further detail regarding deep-sea mining, legal options for putting in place an international moratorium, and outreach with like-minded countries. Thank you for your consideration.

Signed:





