AS THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY CONTINUE THE RUSH TO MINE THE DEEP OCEAN, RESISTANCE GROWS

MEDIA RELEASE

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An international meeting in Kingston, Jamaica begins today, to negotiate regulations that if approved, would permit the largest mining operation in human history to begin in our ocean, as early as July 2023. The meeting will take place from 16-31 March, however, as negotiations get underway, concerns surrounding the emerging industry are at an all-time high. The Deep Sea Conservation (DSCC) will be present throughout negotiations in Kingston.

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is the UN intergovernmental body charged both with regulating any deep-sea mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction and with ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment. The DSCC will be advocating for a moratorium on deep-sea mining throughout negotiations, as well as calling for reform of the ISA to ensure it becomes a transparent, accountable, inclusive, effective and environmentally responsible decision-making body that acts on behalf of humankind as a whole.

Would-be miner, The Metals Company, is aiming to be given the right to start commercial deep-sea mining operations this year. Pacific country Nauru, on its behalf, invoked a little-known loophole known as ‘the 2 year rule’ to demand that mining be given the green light by July 9 of this year.

A broad spectrum of society has called for a moratorium, pause or ban on strip-mining the fragile deep. Governments, scientists, youth groups, businesses and civil society have all urged the ISA to apply the brakes on the industry to avoid both causing irreversible destruction in one of the most fragile ecosystems on our planet and exacerbating the climate crisis. If the industry were to go ahead, scientists warn that it would result in an irreversible loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, species extinctions, and could threaten our planet’s largest carbon sink.

The DSCC’s Deep-Sea Mining Moratorium Global Campaign Lead, Sofia Tsenikli, stated: “It is unthinkable that deep-sea mining could be greenlighted this year. By allowing the strip-mining of one of the last wilderness areas of our planet, our generation would literally be scraping the bottom of the barrel, repeating the same mistakes that brought us to the biodiversity and climate crisis. It is high time that our governments take back control of the process at the ISA and ensure no mining plans are approved - a moratorium on deep-sea mining is the only way forward.”

An increasing number of countries around the world are turning their backs on the destructive, nascent industry, in the face of the multiple risks it poses to people and planet. Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, France, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Germany, New Zealand, Palau, Panama, Samoa and Spain have all called for a ban, moratorium or precautionary pause
The DSCC’s Policy Officer, Emma Wilson added: “No mining should be allowed when there is still no comprehensive scientific knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems or the risks and associated impacts of deep-sea mining, and no guarantee that there would be no harm to the marine environment. Anything less would be a dereliction of government’s duties under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to protect the marine environment and would undermine international commitments to tackle the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.”

Earlier this month, a landmark High Seas Treaty was agreed in New York. The DSCC’s Legal Advisor, Duncan Currie, who was present during all the Treaty negotiations commented: “The agreement of the High Seas Treaty demonstrates the commitment of countries around the world to protect and prioritize the health of our ocean. It is essential that the same countries carry this ambition through to other fora, including the ISA, and support a moratorium on deep-sea mining.”

Speculative interests seek to strip-mine and gouge the deep-seabed for minerals that they claim are needed for batteries for smart technology. However, the battery industry is moving away from these metals as a new generation of batteries that either reuses these metals - or does not use them at all - enters the market. The DSCC’s Co-Founder and Political Adviser, Matthew Gianni said: “Instead of opening up a whole new frontier of large-scale industrial resource extraction and loss of biodiversity in the very environments that sustain us and protect us from the worst effects of the climate crisis, we need instead to develop smarter, low impact, circular technologies and make better use of the resources we already have.” Gianni added: “Our ocean is already under stress from plastics, pollution, overfishing and climate change impacts. At a time of converging biodiversity and climate crises, why would the 167 member countries of the ISA agree to add to these stressors by allowing deep-sea mining to go ahead?”

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About us
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. Our main focus is on ensuring the sustainability of deep-sea fisheries and addressing the potential threat of deep-sea mining.