

27th June 2023

**Take a stance against destructive deep-sea mining at the upcoming International Seabed Authority Council & Assembly meetings, Jamaica, 10 - 28 July 2023.**

Dear Assistant Secretary Littlejohn

In spite of the multiple environmental crises triggered by over-exploitation, negotiations are underway at the International Seabed Authority (ISA) in Jamaica to launch potentially one of the largest extractive operations in history: deep-sea mining. **As an observer of the ISA Council and Assembly and key global actor, we recognize the power and importance of a strong United States position to advance international priorities to build a better future for all. Therefore, we urge the United States to call for a moratorium or pause on deep-seabed mining at the upcoming July 2023 ISA Council and Assembly**

The deep sea “constitutes the largest source of species and ecosystem diversity on Earth” and “supports the diverse ecosystem processes necessary for Earth’s natural systems to function”<sup>1</sup>. Scientists warn that the environmental impacts of deep-sea mining would be large-scale, severe and irreversible on human timescales. These include the extinction of deep-sea species, destruction of ecosystems and habitats, underwater sediment storms, wastewater disposal and non-stop noise and light pollution.

Furthermore, scientific knowledge related to the deep sea and the impacts of mining is [nowhere near sufficient](#) to enable evidence-based decision-making. This is once again highlighted by [new research](#) which estimates that some 90% of the species living on or near the seabed in the Clarion Clipperton Zone, where the industry is looking to start large-scale mining, have yet to be named and thousands remain undiscovered.

Meanwhile, the ISA forges ahead on its accelerated trajectory towards deep-sea mining. Due to the provision known as “the two-year rule” or “loophole”, that expires in July, commercial applications for **deep-sea mining could be approved by the Council of the ISA before the end of this year** - despite the many scientific gaps and the total lack of safeguards for the marine environment. It’s time to step back from the brink and hit pause on deep-sea mining.

The momentum against deep-sea mining is growing. Alongside opposition from the [private sector](#), [scientists](#), [civil society](#) and the [fishing industry](#), **a number of States are calling for a moratorium or precautionary pause** on the impending advance of this highly damaging speculative extractive industry.

As a key global actor, you have the power and the responsibility to ensure that deep-sea mining does not take place unless it can be ensured that the marine environment and any underwater cultural heritage will be effectively protected from harmful effects and that damage to the flora and fauna of the marine environment will be prevented.

As we advance through the 21st century, humanity must find ways to reduce its impacts on this Earth we call home, and learn from the mistakes of the past, rather than repeat them. Deep-sea mining is incompatible with **international commitments to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and to maintain, restore or enhance ecosystem health and ocean resilience. We therefore urge you to take a public stance by joining the call for a moratorium or precautionary pause on deep-sea mining.**

We would be happy to engage in follow-up discussions to provide more information on how to ensure that the deep-ocean is shielded from the harmful effects of a vast new extractive industry. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations First World Ocean Assessment, 2015

