



DSCC Position Statement on Deep Seabed Mining

The overarching goals of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) are to i) substantially reduce the greatest threats to life in the deep sea, and ii) safeguard the long-term health, integrity and resilience of deep-sea ecosystems.

Recognizing that:

1. The deep sea is home to the greatest diversity of species and ecosystems on Earth; provides critical environmental goods and services, including long-term carbon sequestration; and is characterized by environmental conditions that make it highly vulnerable to human disturbance;
2. Scientists have warned that deep seabed mining will cause biodiversity loss, both by destroying seabed life where mining would take place, with little prospect of recovery, and by generating plumes, light, toxins and noise that could impact both benthic and mesopelagic marine life far beyond actual mining sites;
3. The deep ocean is already and is increasingly facing multiple environmental stressors from pollutants, plastics, and climate change and related impacts such as acidification, warming, deoxygenation and reduced supply of nutrients from surface waters; and
4. There is a need for a more strategic global approach to mineral resource production, extraction, use and re-use. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for protection of the oceans and sustainable consumption and production of resources. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the International Resource Panel (IRP) are all calling for transformational change in our use of the Earth's resources to reverse environmentally destructive and wasteful production and consumption patterns.

In keeping with:

1. The need to live and operate within our planetary boundaries, while providing a safe and just space for all;
2. The precautionary principle, which requires that lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for failing or postponing to take action to prevent environmental degradation; the burden of proof should rest with the proponents of an activity; and with the need to explore a wide range of alternatives to possibly harmful actions;
3. The need for public access to information about the environment, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice, as well as the need for inter- and intra-generational equity;
4. The obligations specified in UNCLOS Article 145 to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects, and to that end, to adopt rules, regulations and procedures for the protection and conservation of the natural resources of the Area and the prevention of damage to the flora and fauna of the marine environment from mining activities in the international Area of the deep seabed;

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5. The requirement under UNCLOS that activities in the Area and marine scientific research must be carried out for the benefit of humankind as a whole;
6. The commitment of all countries under the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 on Life Under Water, in particular Target 14.2 to avoid significant adverse impacts on, strengthen the resilience of, and restore marine and coastal ecosystems; and under SDG 12 to Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns;
7. The conclusion of the 2019 UN IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services that up to a million species are threatened with extinction and only through transformative change, also recommended by the IPCC and the IRP, can biodiversity and nature still be conserved, restored and used sustainably; and
8. The decision adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity COP 14 which emphasized that mainstreaming biodiversity in the mining sector is essential for halting the loss of biodiversity and achieving the objectives of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement;

The DSCC holds that there should be a moratorium on: deep seabed mining; the adoption of seabed mining regulations for exploitation (including the “International Seabed Authority Exploitation Regulations”); and the issuing of exploitation and new exploration contracts, unless and until:

1. The environmental, social and economic risks are comprehensively understood;
2. It can be clearly demonstrated that deep seabed mining can be managed in such a way that ensures the effective protection of the marine environment and prevents loss of biodiversity;
3. Where relevant, there is a framework in place to respect the free, prior, informed consent of Indigenous peoples and to ensure consent from potentially affected communities;
4. Alternative sources for the responsible production and use of the metals also found in the deep sea have been fully explored and applied, such as reduction of demand for primary metals, a transformation to a resource efficient, closed-loop materials circular economy, and responsible terrestrial mining practices;
5. Public consultation mechanisms have been established and there is broad and informed public support for deep seabed mining, and that any deep seabed mining permitted by the International Seabed Authority fulfils the obligation to ‘benefit (hu)mankind as a whole’ and respects the Common Heritage of Mankind; and
6. Member States reform the structure and functioning of the International Seabed Authority to ensure a transparent, accountable, inclusive and environmentally responsible decision-making and regulatory process to achieve the above.

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