Dear Minister Goldsmith,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and Pacific island communities at large, we respectfully welcome this opportunity to share the Deep Seabed Mining situation in the Pacific region, that we believe will be of interest to you and highly relevant in your Ministerial roles covering the Pacific, Environment and Commonwealth.

The Pacific is currently the world’s laboratory for the experiment of Deep Seabed Mining. For a long time we have ripped apart the land, exploiting it beyond its limits in our insatiable quest for minerals and metals. Now some countries and the mining industry are positioning to move into the depths of the Pacific Ocean, including via the International Seabed Authority.

The Ocean is our Life - not only for the people of the Pacific but for the international community as well. Inherently, as custodians of our Ocean we understand the interdependent nature of our collective existence and recognize the value of all life forms. As such, it is our role - indeed our cultural obligation - to care for the whole Ocean and maintain the ecosystem services it provides for our grandchildren’s grandchildren. As much as the Ocean needs our guardianship, we need a healthy, thriving Ocean for our continued well-being and livelihoods. Yet Deep Seabed Mining threatens both destruction of the seabed and its ecosystem and, through toxic and suffocating plumes, damage to Ocean health and productivity, and particularly to tuna on which our livelihoods depend.

The proposal to mine the Ocean floor will hurt our people and is an affront to our longstanding cultural world-view. Whilst others might view the Ocean as what separates us in the world, we see the Ocean
as what links and connects us all. Deep seabed mining threatens this vital connection while permanently altering nature.

The experimental nature of Deep Seabed Mining brings with it a very high level of uncertainty about the risks to the marine environment and coastal communities connected to and reliant upon the Ocean’s sustenance. Adding another stressor to an already compromised Ocean ecosystem which has been affected by climate change, ocean acidification, pollution and overfishing is frankly irresponsible and would obviously hobble collective efforts to improve Ocean health.

We must not support a pioneer industry which will bring certain destruction considering existing stressors on the Oceans health have not been adequately addressed or given the urgency that is required.

Our people are mindful that ‘not all things that glitter are gold’. The precautionary principle mandates that we do not undertake a new damaging industry in the face of scientific and technological uncertainties and we know that without our interference, profit-driven foreign companies can put us in a situation that will hurt us in the future.

We dispute that achieving a zero-carbon economy requires metals from the deep sea. In fact Tongan seabed mining contractor Tonga Offshore Minerals Ltd have recently acknowledged that it does not. There are alternatives including socially and environmentally improved terrestrial mining and a range of circular economy options such as reducing demand, product redesign, reuse, repair and greatly improved potential for recycling.

Developed countries like the United Kingdom that consume disproportionate amounts of resources share a responsibility for addressing overexploitation of natural resources and the climate and biodiversity crisis which are a front-line Pacific reality. It is time to stop using the Pacific to provide the North’s resources at the expense of our environment.

**We say ‘no’ to Deep Seabed Mining and ‘yes’ to marine protection and upholding human rights.**

In order to preserve the resources and cultures of the Pacific for future generations, we count on international support.

Given the high number of Pacific members of the Commonwealth; the UK’s role at the International Seabed Authority as a Sponsoring State; and acknowledging the UK’s long track record of responsible leadership on ocean biodiversity and climate issues, we are convinced that the UK government is an important stakeholder and can be an important ally for us as Pacific peoples on the front-line.

Statements from some Commonwealth Pacific Island leaders calling for a moratorium on Deep Seabed Mining should be acknowledged and these leaders should be encouraged to advance their statements into policies.

Now more than ever, we need the UK to stand up for what is right.

We are calling on the United Kingdom government to publicly support 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 in the international Area, unless and until the environmental, social and economic risks and the technology are comprehensively understood.

It needs to be clearly demonstrated that deep seabed mining can be managed to ensure the protection of the marine environment and prevent loss of biodiversity before any more moves are made that will cause irreversible damage to our Moana Nui o Kiva (Pacific Ocean).

In order to provide further information and perspective on this issue, we request a virtual meeting at a time that suits you.

We look forward to your earliest attention to this matter, Lord Goldsmith, and to your Government's supportive response.

Yours sincerely,

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