For immediate release: 6th December 2021

PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY MEETING OPENS: DON’T START MINING SAYS CIVIL SOCIETY

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) meeting starting in Kingston today (December 6th) should focus on agreeing to a moratorium on deep-sea mining, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) has said.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2021 adopted, with overwhelming support from civil society organizations and government agencies, Resolution 069 on the protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on deep-sea mining, including on exploitation regulations by the ISA and reform of the ISA.

However, Nauru, as the sponsoring State of would-be deep-sea miner Nauru Offshore Resources Inc. (NORI), a subsidiary of The Metals Company (TMC), has triggered an obscure legal provision called a two-year rule, which TMC hopes will result in a contract for deep-sea mining being given to NORI in 2 years time. As a reaction to the demand, the ISA Secretariat has proposed a ‘road map’ for the world to follow, which would lead to regulations being agreed by July 2023 opening the door to decades of massive scale strip mining affecting delicate and poorly understood deep sea ecosystems of the Pacific.

The worst thing the ISA could do is go full-steam ahead to mine the deep-sea in response to what a large corporation is demanding, through a sponsoring State.” said Matthew Gianni of DSCC. “The only justifiable response to Nauru’s demand is a moratorium on seabed mining.”

Six hundred and twenty one scientists from forty four countries have signed a statement warning that deep seabed mining will result in the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning that would be irreversible on multi-generational timescales and have called for a pause on the development of deep seabed mining.

“International law is clear that the ISA must ensure the effective protection of the marine environment” said Duncan Currie, representing DSCC at the meeting. “This simply is not possible at the moment, as can be seen from a recent environmental impact assessment by NORI that omitted the crucial environmental baseline.”

Global companies such as BMW Group, Volvo Group, Volkswagen, Google, Samsung SDI, Scania, Philips, Patagonia, and banks such as Triodos Bank, have all joined in support of a moratorium on deep seabed mining.

The ISA Council meeting is scheduled to run until the 10th December with the proposed ISA Road Map expected for discussion on the 9th. The ISA Assembly meeting will then run until the 15th.
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Notes

The European Parliament, made up of elected representatives from 27 States represented at the ISA, has called for a moratorium, and so have Parliamentarians for Global Action. European fisheries advisory groups such as the Long-Distance Advisory Council and other fisheries organisations such as the International Pole and Line Foundation, the Norwegian Fisheries Association, the South Africa Tuna Association and South African Hake Long Line Association.

Last week, the DSCC premiered a new film, In Too Deep, exploring the threat of deep-sea mining.