



## Deep Sea Conservation Coalition written submission to the United Nations Ocean Conference (27 June – 1 July 2022)

### Deep-sea mining

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Scientists have warned that biodiversity loss would be unavoidable if deep-sea mining, as currently envisioned, is permitted to occur and that most biodiversity loss as a result of operations is likely to be permanent. Over 600 scientists have called for a pause on deep-sea mining given “the direct loss of unique and ecologically important species and populations as a result of the degradation, destruction or elimination of seafloor habitat”, likely to be caused by mining. They have also cautioned that a lack of independent scientific information concerning the biology, ecology and connectivity of deep-sea species and ecosystems and the services they provide means that the risks deep-sea mining poses to deep ocean ecosystems as well as human wellbeing and livelihoods, cannot be fully understood.<sup>1</sup>

Last year the IUCN World Conservation Council passed [resolution 122](#) calling for Member States to support and implement a moratorium on deep seabed mining, issuing of exploitation and new exploration contracts, and the adoption of seabed mining regulations for exploitation, including ‘exploitation’ regulations by the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

After the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which in Article 145, requires the ISA and obligates States Parties “to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from such [mining] activities”, States have repeatedly committed, through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Rio+20 conference, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other meetings and instruments, to apply the precautionary approach; halt and reverse the loss of marine biodiversity; take action to restore degraded ecosystems and build the resilience of marine ecosystems. Nonetheless, the ISA is poised to begin issuing contracts for commercial deep-sea mining in the international seabed area as soon as 2023.<sup>2</sup>

In light of the above, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, which unites over 100 organisations, calls on States to **promote a moratorium, including at the International Seabed Authority, on deep-seabed mining until such time as the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities at sea have been studied and researched sufficiently, deep seabed mining can be managed to ensure no marine biodiversity loss nor degradation of marine ecosystems and the ISA is reformed to ensure transparent, accountable, inclusive, effective and environmentally responsible decision making and regulations.**

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<sup>1</sup> Deep-Sea Mining Science Statement at <https://www.seabedminingsciencstatement.org/> See also Amon et al., Assessment of scientific gaps related to the effective environmental management of deep-seabed mining, Marine Policy, March 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105006>

<sup>2</sup> A Mining Startup’s Rush for Underwater Metals Comes With Deep Risks. 24 June 2021

<https://www.bloombergquint.com/business/a-mining-startup-s-rush-for-underwater-metals-comes-with-deep-risks> Copyright © BloombergQuint; Race to the bottom: the disastrous, blindfolded rush to mine the deep sea. 27 September 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/sep/27/race-to-the-bottom-the-disastrous-blindfolded-rush-to-mine-the-deep-sea>



## **Protecting deep-sea biodiversity on seamounts from destructive fishing practices**

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While much has been done to implement the CBD COP-7 commitments and UNGA resolutions pertaining to protecting deep-sea biodiversity on seamounts from destructive fishing practices, more needs to be done to 'finish the job'. Deep-sea bottom trawl fishing is still permitted on many seamounts and oceanic ridge systems on the high seas, particularly in the Northwest and Southwest Pacific and Southern Indian Oceans.

In November 2022, the UNGA will conduct a review of the implementation of the UNGA resolutions adopted since 2006 related to protecting deep-sea biodiversity from destructive fishing practices in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition **calls on the United Nations General Assembly to commit states to prohibit bottom trawling on seamounts and other underwater features in areas beyond national jurisdiction and eliminate the threat of destructive fishing practices to the biodiversity of seamounts, hydrothermal vents, coldwater corals and other vulnerable ecosystems in areas beyond national jurisdiction.**