CIVIL SOCIETY CALL ON ISA MEMBER STATES TO HIT THE BRAKES ON DESTRUCTIVE DEEP-SEA MINING

DSCC ISA Council Meeting Opening Media Release

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Kingston, Jamaica

As final preparations for the landmark UN climate and biodiversity conferences get underway, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), based in Kingston, Jamaica, pushes to develop regulations that if adopted, would see our planet's largest carbon store opened to the biggest mining operation in human history.

From 31st October - 11th November, ISA member States will gather in Kingston, Jamaica to negotiate regulations that if adopted, could see the deep ocean opened to commercial exploitation for the first time, as soon as July 2023.

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) Deep-Sea Mining Campaign Lead, Sofia Tsenikli said: “Next month, world leaders will gather to tackle the dual climate and biodiversity crises. Meanwhile, in Kingston, the ISA is pushing ahead with an industry that would be guaranteed to cause widespread and irreversible harm to our ocean, our greatest ally in the climate crisis. It is unthinkable that deep-sea mining could be greenlit as early as next year.”

This year has seen a vast tidal wave of concern surrounding the emerging industry gain traction. Governments, parliamentarians from over 50 countries, more than 650 scientists, companies (including Google, Microsoft, Samsung and BMW), banks, huge swathes of the public and civil society organisations have all called for a stop to the nascent industry. Last week, New Zealand joined calls for a moratorium and earlier this year at the UN Ocean Conference, Palau spearheaded an Alliance of Countries Calling for a Moratorium on Deep-Sea Mining with Fiji, Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia since joining the Alliance. At the same conference, French President Emmanuel Macron also called for a stop to mining on the high seas.

Emma Wilson, the DSCC’s Policy Offer, called on countries to take critical action to protect the long term health of the ocean, stating: “It’s time for ISA member States to take a stand for the ocean before it’s too late and publicly call for a precautionary pause to the emerging deep-sea mining industry. Countries need to pull back from the brink, and soon, or they could release a runaway train of environmental catastrophe into our ocean, with no way back.”
The DSCC’s Legal Adviser, Duncan Currie added: “The negotiations taking place over the next two weeks provide governments with a concrete opportunity to turn words into action and stop the rush to exploit the deep sea by an industry that risks disturbing the very life support systems that we all rely on, to line the pockets of a few companies in the global north at the expense of future generations. It is urgent that countries adopt a moratorium or precautionary pause now.”

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition will be present in Kingston throughout the negotiations calling for a stop to the destructive industry, alongside member organisations including Oceans North, Greenpeace, AIDA, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Ocean Foundation and the Sustainable Ocean Alliance.

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Notes to editors:
- Last week, a new report highlighted the potential impacts of deep-sea mining of polymetallic sulphide deposits. Sediment plumes from mining activities are projected to disperse far beyond licenced mining areas, smothering seabed marine life, including habitat-forming cold-water corals.