



Sustainable Ocean Alliance

Position Statement on Deep-Seabed Mining

Position

Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA) was founded to develop the next generation of leaders and accelerate solutions that will protect and sustain the health of our ocean. We firmly believe that present and future generations have the right to inherit a healthy and thriving ocean. Therefore SOA, representing the largest global network of young ocean leaders, calls for a moratorium on deep-seabed mining, for at least for 10 years, in line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science, which enables the global community to:

1. Undertake scientific research to better understand the unique deep-sea biodiversity, the seabed's role in carbon storage and the larger climate system, the potential impacts of mining and the risks to deep-sea species and ecosystems, the potential for mitigation and recovery, and the opportunities to invest in and expand the circular economy; and
2. Ensure that decision-making processes around deep-seabed mining, such as those at the International Seabed Authority (ISA) are inclusive, transparent, accountable, adequately account for intergenerational equity, and ensure the protection of marine biodiversity and the ocean's health.

This position resonates deeply with SOA's global community of young leaders, as they recognize that deep-seabed mining could be a final tipping point for an ocean already under extreme threat - and one that would have long-lasting impacts on future generations. Therefore, with so much at stake, we urge the global community to take a considered pause before rushing forward with deep-seabed mining, putting the precautionary principle, science, and transparent processes first.

Background

- The deep sea and the seabed are home to a plethora of species that exist in extremely biodiverse, fragile, and unique ecosystems, many of which are found nowhere else on the planet.
- At present, deep-sea ecosystems remain largely unexplored and poorly understood.
- In recent years, there has been expanding international interest to commercially mine the deep-seabed to access highly sought after minerals and metals, such as cobalt, copper, manganese, nickel, and more, under the guise of fueling the green energy revolution.
- The potential impacts of mining the deep-seabed are many, including species and habitat loss, shifts in ocean chemistry and systems, release of sequestered carbon, and widespread sediment plumes that can disrupt species and ecosystems.
- Scientists have raised concerns that deep-sea ecosystems likely will not recover within human timescales, if ever, from the impacts of deep-seabed mining.

- The International Seabed Authority (ISA), which regulates mining in the international seabed, already has issued 30 mining exploration licenses, covering more than 1 million square kilometers of deep-seabed in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Ocean.
- At present, no exploitation licenses have been issued, but the pressure is mounting for the ISA to move forward with finalizing and adopting exploitation regulations that would open the door for large-scale industrial mining of the deep sea to begin internationally.

Why we are calling for a moratorium on deep-seabed mining:

1. **We need more deep-sea science** – In line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science, we should commit to expanding deep-sea research and science before moving forward with deep-seabed mining so that we better understand the deep-sea ecosystems and their benefits, the potential for preventing and mitigating impacts from mining, and the timescale and likelihood for recovery.
2. **We need to implement the precautionary principle** – Without adequate scientific understanding and high risk for irreparable impact, we should be leading with the precautionary principle until risks are fully understood rather than rushing forward with deep-seabed mining for the sake of short-term profits.
3. **We need to protect the deep sea’s climate benefits** – Given the state of our global climate, we need to protect the deep-sea ecosystems for their ability to sequester and store carbon, which is critical to regulating and stabilizing our global ocean and climate systems.
4. **We need to align our global ocean commitments** – Moving forward with deep-seabed mining, without adequate scientific understanding of the scale of impact to the ocean, does not align with the global community’s continued commitment to the health and resiliency of our ocean through SDG 14, the BBNJ process, the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere, and the Blue COP. We must continue to hold governments to these commitments.
5. **We need to invest in a circular economy** – For our present and future, we must invest in innovation and the circular economy rather than the outdated linear model of ‘take, make, waste’ that relies on extraction from pristine environments, such as the deep sea, and results in devastating biodiversity loss and extensive environmental impact.
6. **We need transparent and inclusive decision making processes** – Any decisions to move forward with deep-seabed mining must be made through transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision making processes that adequately account for intergenerational equity.

Call for Support:

SOA and its global community of young leaders are passionate and unwavering in their belief that deep-seabed mining is an unjustified threat to the health of our ocean and the present and future generations that depend on it. We therefore ask you to join us in calling for a moratorium on deep-seabed mining, for at least 10 years, in line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science. We also call for the

decision-making processes around deep-seabed mining, particularly within the ISA, to be inclusive, transparent, and accountable, considering both present and future generations.

In the words of SOA's Founder and CEO, Daniela Fernandez, "We can no longer deny the trajectory of the climate's decline, nor can we accept the pillage of our last natural resources for economic gain. We ask that you and your community support us in our call for a moratorium on deep-seabed mining."

Sources

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