

Greenpeace International Intervention at the 27th Session of the International Seabed Authority

Assembly - Report of the Secretary General

Kingston, 2 August 2022

Thank you Mr. Acting President.

I make this intervention on behalf of Greenpeace International, The Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) and the Pacific Blue Line (PBL) Collective representing national, regional and southern based Civil Society Organizations in the Pacific.

We thank the Secretary General for his extensive report and the staff of the Secretariat for their support. We also thank the government and the people of Jamaica for their hospitality and warm welcome.

We would like to make a few brief observations in addition to the comments made by the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, which we fully support.

The report discusses the status of contracts for exploration, including the announcement by the Foreign Ministry of Tuvalu on the 14th of April, 2022 that it was rescinding its sponsorship of Circular Metals Ltd, for exploration of polymetallic nodules in the international sea.

This is the very first unilateral termination of a state-sponsored contract in the Area. For many, particularly from developing states, this decision may be seen to deny the economic possibilities of benefits and people, the central premise for which many of our smaller island developing states are currently pursuing as their sovereign right.

However, for Pacific groups, the decision by Tuvalu is an expression of our 'common stewardship responsibility' in an area considered to be the common heritage of humankind. Our common stewardship and responsibility is to ensure stringent environmental protection in light of the potential harm that deep sea mining could entail on ecosystems, biodiversity, fisheries and worse still the potential harm on the climatic function that the deep ocean plays which will be a liability borne by the sponsoring state. It is our greatest hope that this will deter mining from proceeding in the deep ocean.

It is hard to avoid addressing the triggering of the 2-year rule mechanism in this context, given the many and potentially far-reaching consequences it is having, including in the ISA, and the imminent threat it poses to the fragile environment of the deep sea ecosystem and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

It is clear that the challenges of the 2-year rule trigger need more and deeper discussion and understanding. Therefore, we warmly welcome Chile's proposal for an agenda item to address this topic at the Assembly, where all ISA Member States are represented.

As an observer we are seeing clear signs of confusion, discord and alarm over how to proceed, and the implications of what some pathways might mean, both for international governance and the real world ocean resources they are meant to govern.

Under such uncertainty, there seems only one logical course of action - the one of caution. The adoption of a moratorium or a precautionary pause is essential - a call supported by an increasing number of stakeholders. We call on all delegations to follow the example set by those who have already called for a moratorium or other forms of 'time out' and precautionary measures.

Thank you