

Greenpeace Intervention at the 26th Session of the International Seabed Authority

Kingston, 07 December 2021

Thank you Mr President,

Dear Delegates,

Greenpeace attends this 26th Session of the ISA extremely concerned about the way things are evolving within this international organisation. With the triggering of the two-year rule by Nauru last June, there is a real threat that the ISA will rush into seabed mining in spite of its legal obligation, first and foremost, to ensure the protection of the marine environment, including the seabed, which is the common heritage of humankind.

Invoking the two-year rule in times of a global pandemic is a clear example of the relentless efforts of the deep seabed mining industry, and those who would enable it, to get its way regardless of the potential impacts on people and the Planet. In invoking the 2 year Rule, Nauru said that, in their view, draft exploitation code is nearly complete. This is very far from the truth and profoundly concerning to hear from a party to this process.

This session is going ahead while many nations are under pandemic restrictions and the voices of much of civil society, particularly Pacific Communities that have long expressed grave concern with the advancement of seabed mining, are not present. Making the decision to do so is both reckless and inequitable.

We call on the Council to listen to the 621 scientists that have signed a statement warning of the loss of biodiversity on ecosystem functioning, to banks such as ABN Amro and Triodos, corporations such as Patagonia, to the recent resolution of the IUCN World Conservation Congress and to the European Parliament - all of which have called for a moratorium on deep-sea mining. We remind Member States that deep sea mining companies have been telling us that seabed minerals are critical for the clean energy transition. Yet the tech, EV and battery sectors do not agree. BMW, Volkswagen, Volvo Group, Scania, Google and Samsung have all joined the call for a moratorium on the practice. While Microsoft, Ford, GM¹ and Rivian² have all effectively blocked the procurement of deep sea minerals from their supply chains. Meanwhile, battery technology is advancing at a lightning pace to reduce and recycle the use of critical minerals overall. So if this is the sector that is supposed to drive the market for deep seabed mining, we raise the question here whether a market will exist at all.

¹ Both Ford and GM have committed to only source minerals that are certified by IRMA - the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance. IRMA will not certify deep sea mining.

<https://responsiblemining.net/>

² Rivian has stated agreement with a moratorium on deep sea mining in a public letter to SOC investment group. They also source their batteries from Samsung SDI, which has signed onto the Business Statement on deep sea mining, and therefore supports the call for a moratorium.

<https://www.noseabedmining.org/>

We call on State parties to the ISA - many who have made bold public commitments for ocean protection in other fora - to act and put the brakes on this process, which is not inevitable and which is out of step with the rest of the world.

Finally, regarding the discussion to follow for the remainder of this Session, Greenpeace stands with the recommendations put forward by the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

A longer version of this intervention is available at:

<https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Greenpeace-Intervention-26th-Session-ISA-1.pdf>

Thank you Mr. President

Annex

Governments, at the ISA and elsewhere, should listen to the increasing number of voices from various stakeholders from around the world, as well as consider the growing opposition of businesses - particularly those in the tech and energy transition sector - who are committing to not use minerals from the deep seabed, mindful of the impacts that deep seabed mining will have on biodiversity.

621 scientists from 44 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.

Next to the [European Parliament](#), made up of elected representatives from 27 States represented at the ISA, Parliamentarians for Global Action have called for a moratorium. 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 or the South African Hake Long Line Association, have joined the call.

The World Conservation Congress in September 2021 adopted, with overwhelming support, [Resolution 069](#) on the protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining, including exploitation regulations by the ISA.

Last, it is businesses themselves who [are saying that](#) *“all alternatives to deep sea minerals must be explored as a matter of urgency, with a focus on reducing demand for primary metals, transitioning to a resource-efficient, closed-loop materials economy, and developing responsible terrestrial mining practices.”*

The ISA seems to be rushing in the opposite direction, embracing the dawn of commercial deep seabed mining irrespective of time, Covid or informed warnings, and therefore effectively preventing the debate that society is demanding around the very need of this industry.

On a planet subject to an unprecedented environmental crisis Greenpeace is opposed to continuing to increase the human footprint on the planet by wreaking havoc in one of the most untouched ecosystems on Earth, the deep sea. [Together with over 140 civil society organizations from around the world](#) we call on State parties to the ISA to prevent commercial deep seabed mining from being authorised.

We face a climate emergency and unprecedented global biodiversity loss. People throughout the world, including hundreds of thousands of young people whose future is at stake, are marching on the streets to demand urgent action from their governments. We must remind Governments of their responsibility towards the common good. Your commitment is with the people, not with the interests of a handful of companies and investors. It is not acceptable that negotiations of an Ocean Treaty to protect biodiversity are stalled and cannot be finalised due to the lack of political will of some parties and more recently because of Covid, while the same Governments who call themselves champions for ocean protection will rush the adoption of rules and regulations that will open the largest ecosystem on the planet to relentless industrial extraction.

We call on you, as representatives of your governments, to heed the words of scientists and concerned citizens across the world to bring about a moratorium on deep seabed mining, as a renewed commitment to the precautionary principle.

Thank you Mr President