



Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE)

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July 7, 2026

To: International Seabed Authority (ISA) and its Member States
From: Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) Around the World
Subject: **Indigenous Peoples Call for a Global Moratorium on Deep-Sea Mining**

Excellencies,

We write to you on behalf of Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE) – a regional platform of Indigenous defenders and their organizations in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and West Papua – and the undersigned Indigenous Peoples organizations, supporting civil society and environmental groups, and individuals, united in our mission to protect Indigenous Peoples’ rights in pursuit of a just and sustainable management of the environment, including the ocean.

In light of the significant environmental and cultural risks as well as equity concerns connected to deep-sea mining that disproportionately threaten Indigenous Peoples, we strongly urge all ISA Member States to take a firm public stance in support of a moratorium or precautionary pause on deep-sea mining (DSM).

Indigenous Peoples are stewards of over 25% of the Earth’s land and seas.¹ For many coastal Indigenous Peoples, the ocean is understood as a mother, ancestor, relative, or living kin, forming part of a broader network of reciprocal relationships, responsibilities, and genealogical connections that underpin cultural identity, governance systems, and stewardship practices.² The ocean is also a provider of vast resources that they economically depend on. In this context, **Indigenous Peoples are rightsholders of customary coastal and marine territories, knowledge holders who have and continue to act as sustainable managers of marine environment, and frontliners who most immediately and acutely experience the adverse impacts of exploitative activities at sea.**

First, we note the deep sea is the largest and the least explored ecosystem on Earth. The best available science suggests DSM would cause substantial, potentially irreversible harm to deep-seabed habitats including those below Indigenous marine territories, the millions of undiscovered species that are presumed to inhabit there, and ultimately the entire marine environment that plays a crucial role in climate mitigation as we grapple with the triple planetary crisis.³

¹ Gleb Raygorodetsky, *Indigenous Peoples Defend Earth's Biodiversity—But They're in Danger*, NAT'L GEOGRAPHIC (Nov. 16, 2018), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/can-indigenous-land-stewardship-protect-biodiversity->; Ocean Science in Action: How Indigenous Knowledge Advances Ocean Science Across the World, OCEAN DECADE (Dec. 17, 2025), <https://oceandecade.org/news/ocean-science-in-action-how-indigenous-knowledge-advances-ocean-science-across-the-world/>.

² Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui, He Pū‘ao ke Kai, He Kai ka Pū‘ao (Ocean as Womb, Womb as Ocean): Mana Wahine Aloha ‘Āina Activism as Return, Revival, and Remembrance, 48 *Amerasia J.* 107 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00447471.2023.2241487>; Judy Benson, Can We Learn to Be in Kinship with the Ocean?, 37(1) *Oceanography* 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2024.215>.

³ Craig R. Smith et al., Deep-Sea Misconceptions Cause Underestimation of Seabed-Mining Impacts, 35 *TRENDS IN ECOLOGY & EVOLUTION* 853 (2020); Andrea Koschinsky et al., Deep-sea mining: Interdisciplinary research on potential environmental, legal, economic, and societal implications, 14 *INTEGRATED ENV'T ASSESSMENT & MGMT.* 672 (2018); Ann Vanreusel et al., Threatened by mining, polymetallic nodules are required to preserve abyssal epifauna, 6 *SCI. REPORTS* (2016); Travis W. Washburn et al., Impacts of the first deep-sea seafloor massive sulfide mining excavation tests on benthic

Deep sea mining also threatens the cultural integrity of coastal Indigenous communities by jeopardizing traditional economies based on fishing and sustainable use of marine resources. Waste, noise, and other disturbances caused by mining can pollute or reduce productivity of traditional fisheries and waters, risking the integrity and cultural continuity of customary food and knowledge systems as well as economic resilience of coastal Indigenous communities.

As a result, DSM can accelerate unwanted or forcible urban migration. For coastal Indigenous communities whose cultural identity is grounded in their relationship and daily interaction with the marine environment, displacement erodes Indigenous identity by disrupting family structures, disintegrating communities, and hampering the practice of vibrant cultural traditions directly linked to the sea.⁴

Thus, the potential impacts of deep sea mining directly translate as a threat to the Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination, among other rights, as enshrined in international laws, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO Convention No. 169), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and raises equity concerns about benefit distribution as stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).⁵

In addition to these potential impacts, Indigenous Peoples have already been experiencing actual violations of their land and marine territorial or tenure rights due to the frequent exclusion from public consultations and lack of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous communities in the design and implementation of corporate, national, and international regulations regarding DSM.⁶ Furthermore, corporations have dismissed opposition from coastal Indigenous communities, deepening historical patterns of marginalization and cultural erosion we have witnessed in the context of terrestrial mining and other extractive projects.⁷

With the industry aggressively escalating DSM explorations under the name of green transition, while we sympathize with the urgency of the climate crisis, we firmly emphasize that just transition must ensure sustainable prosperity among all peoples, including Indigenous Peoples, as well as the more-than-human world including the ocean.

We recall the 2021 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Congress in Marseille, whereby IUCN Member States, civil society and Indigenous Peoples organizations overwhelmingly voted to call for a moratorium on DSM until and unless FPIC of affected Indigenous Peoples is obtained, among other conditions.⁸ We thus call on the Member States, as leaders and decisionmakers, to join us once more and

communities, 712 MARINE ECOLOGY PROGRESS SERIES (2023); Roberto Danovaro et al., The Deep-Sea Under Global Change, 27 CURRENT BIOLOGY R461 (2017).

⁴ Prabindra Shakya & Johnson Jament, *Deep-Sea Danger: How The Metals Company Threatens Indigenous and Coastal Communities in Asia and the Pacific*, Cultural Survival (Feb. 2, 2026), <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/deep-sea-danger-how-metals-company-threatens-indigenous-and-coastal-communities-asia-and>.

⁵ Int'l Union for Conservation of Nature, *Deep Seabed Mining and Human Rights* (Apr. 3, 2024), <https://iucn.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/human-rights-dsm-brief-2024-04-03.pdf>.

⁶ Elisa Morgera, *Participation of Indigenous Peoples in Decision Making Over Deep-Seabed Mining*, 118 AJIL UNBOUND 77 (2024); Julian Aguon & Julie Hunter, Second Wave Due Diligence: The Case for Incorporating Free, Prior, and Informed Consent into the Deep Sea Mining Regulatory Scheme, 38 STAN. ENVTL. L.J. 3 (2018); Julian Arato, Aline Jaeckel & Lucas Lixinski, *On the Cultural Stakes of Deep Seabed Mining*, 118 AJIL UNBOUND 67 (2024).

⁷ C.M. Doyle, H. Tugendhat & R. Halip eds., *Mining, the Aluminium Industry, and Indigenous Peoples: Enhancing Corporate Respect for Indigenous Peoples' Rights* (IUCN, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact & Forest Peoples Programme 2015); Emma S. Norman et al., *Indigenous Peoples' Relationships to Large-Scale Mining in Post/Colonial Contexts: Toward Multidisciplinary Comparative Perspectives*, 5 EXTRACTIVE INDUS. & SOC'Y 404 (2018).

⁸ Bruno Oberle, *IUCN Director General's Open Letter to ISA Members on Deep-Sea Mining*, Int'l Union for Conservation of Nature (Mar. 6, 2023), <https://iucn.org/dg-statement/202303/iucn-director-generals-open-letter-isa-members-deep-sea-mining>;

demonstrate their commitments to defend the deep sea, international law including UNCLOS and UNDRIP, as well as the core values of sustainable development, including multilateralism and just transition.

We accordingly welcome the 43 Member States that have announced support for a moratorium or precautionary pause on DSM. Furthermore, we request the Member States that are yet to endorse a moratorium or precautionary pause on DSM to do so immediately and publicly, and to ensure that this position is clearly implemented at the ISA. We also call on the ISA to create space for inclusive and meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples in the global dialogue on DSM and ocean governance more broadly by establishing an Indigenous Peoples Advisory Body at the ISA.

The question of DSM is one that penetrates the root of the climate crisis: a history of anthropocentric extractivism that placed corporate profit before public good and collective governance. We invite you to change the tide of this history by answering in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples organizations that DSM should be halted to protect the deep-sea and the current and future generations who depend on it.

Yours sincerely,



Prabindra Shakya
Convenor

Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE)

Endorsed by:

SN	Organization name	Country based in
1.	AidWatch	Australia
2.	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara Wilayah Maluku	Indonesia
3.	Alliance of Solwara Warriors	Papua New Guinea
4.	Alternative Law Collective	Pakistan
5.	Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM)	Philippines
6.	Amnesty International Canada	Canada
7.	Ang Aroroy Ay Alagaan, Inc	Philippines
8.	Asia Indigenous Women's Network	Philippines
9.	Asia-Pacific Transition Mineral Accountability Working Group	United Kingdom
10.	Association For Promotion Sustainable development	India
11.	Banaban Human Rights Defenders Network	Fiji
12.	Batani Foundation	United States
13.	Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO)	Cambodia
14.	Convergence of Initiatives for Environmental Justice	Philippines
15.	Cordillera Peoples Alliance	Philippines

Int'l Union for Conservation of Nature, *WCC-2020-Res-122, Protection of Deep-Ocean Ecosystems and Biodiversity Through a Moratorium on Seabed Mining* (World Conservation Congress 2020, Marseille, Fr.),
https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2020_RES_122_EN.pdf.

16.	Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC)	Netherlands
17.	Deep Sea Mining Campaign	Australia
18.	Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit at Iona University	United States
19.	Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz	Germany
20.	Earthworks	United States
21.	ECIP National Secretariat	Philippines
22.	Empower India	India
23.	Environmental Defender Law Center	United States
24.	Environmental Defenders Collaborative	United States
25.	Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	United Kingdom
26.	Federación de comunidades nativas de Ucayali y Afluentes (FECONAU)	Peru
27.	FishNet Alliance Network	Nigeria
28.	Franciscans International	Switzerland
29.	Friends with Environment in Development	Uganda
30.	Green Advocates International	Liberia
31.	Greenpeace Africa	South Africa
32.	Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)	Nigeria
33.	Homonhon Environmental advocates and Rights Defenders	Philippines
34.	HRM "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"	Kyrgyzstan
35.	Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples North East Zone	India
36.	Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self- Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL)	Philippines
37.	Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI)	Philippines
38.	Indigenous Peoples' Organisation - Australia	Australia
39.	Indigenous Without Borders (IWB)	Nepal
40.	Inisiasi Masyarakat Adat (IMA)	Indonesia
41.	International Accountability Project	United States
42.	International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)	Japan
43.	JUHUDI Community Support Center	Kenya
44.	Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment	Philippines
45.	Kapaeeng Foundation	Bangladesh
46.	Kōrero o te 'Ōrau	Cook Islands
47.	KOTHOWAIN (Vulnerable Peoples Development Organization) Bandarban Hill Tract, BANGLADESH	Bangladesh
48.	Koalisyon ng mga Mamamayan at Sambayanan ng Northern at Sentral	Philippines

	Luzon (KUMASA NA)	
49.	KYMA sea conservation & research	Switzerland
50.	Latinoamérica Sustentable	Ecuador
51.	Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Friends of the Earth Philippines	Philippines
52.	Libera Foundation against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery in All its Forms	Chile
53.	Liberia Artisanal Fishermen Association LAFA	Liberia
54.	Manushya Foundation	Thailand
55.	Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers	United States
56.	Mining Watch Canada	Canada
57.	Minority Rights Group International	United Kingdom
58.	MY World Mexico: Hub of Action for Sustainable Development	Mexico
59.	National Indigenous Women Forum (NIWF)	Nepal
60.	Ocean Ancestors	Cook Islands
61.	Ocean Toa Tupuna Cook Islands	Cook Islands
62.	OilWatch International	Nigeria
63.	Ocean Patrol Association, Conservation & Sustainability (OPAA)	Portugal
64.	Our Seas Our Future	New Zealand
65.	Oxfam	Kenya
66.	Oyu Tolgoi Watch	Mongolia
67.	Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)	Japan
68.	Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG)	Fiji
69.	Papua New Guinea Resource Governance Coalition	Papua New Guinea
70.	Peace Point Development Foundation-PPDF	Nigeria
71.	Peoples Development Community (PDC)	Bangladesh
72.	Perkumpulan Manusia Sulawesi Anthropocelebes	Indonesia
73.	Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates	Philippines
74.	Piku Biodiversity Network Inc.	Papua New Guinea
75.	Planet Tracker	United Kingdom
76.	Publish What You Pay (PWYP) Indonesia	Indonesia
77.	Rivers & Rights	Thailand
78.	Rivers without Boundaries Coalition	Mongolia
79.	Roots2Justice	United Kingdom
80.	Rural Development Organization, Pakistan	Pakistan
81.	Saami Council	Norway

82.	Samata	India
83.	Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA)	Malaysia
84.	Sciaena	Portugal
85.	Sibuyanon Against Mining (SAM)	Philippines
86.	Te Ipukarea Society	Cook Islands
87.	Tetiaroa Society	France
88.	The Common Good Foundation, Inc.	United States
89.	The Congress of Nations and States	United States
90.	The Ocean and Us	Netherlands
91.	The William Gomes Podcast	United Kingdom
92.	Trend Asia	Indonesia
93.	Urgewald	Germany
94.	Vikas Adhyayan Kendra	India
95.	World Christian Life Community	Italy
96.	Youth Association for Development (YAD) Pakistan	Pakistan

Individual Endorsements:

SN	Name	Country based in
1.	Dharmendra Kumar	India
2.	Ruekeith Anak Jampong	Malaysia
3.	Marie Joyce Godio	-
4.	Satej Chakma	United States of America
5.	Julie Funaki	Niue
6.	Dr. Suresh Tamang	Nepal
7.	Keshia De Freece Lawrence	Canada
8.	Cheila Almeida	Portugal
9.	Laxmi Dhoju	-
10.	Alessandro Ramazzotti	United States of America
11.	Gayle K. Carda	United States of America
12.	Mssaru Tamura	-
13.	Anna Zalik	Canada
14.	David Kalant	Canada
15.	Marilyn McKim	Canada
16.	Saswati Swetlena	India
17.	Nnimmo Bassey	Nigeria

18.	Rosa Koian	Papua New Guinea
19.	Vaishali Patil	India
20.	Lolita Bogya Dunag	Philippines
21.	Ulrich Karlowski	Germany
22.	Anneka Spice	Canada
23.	Katherine Laundry	Canada
24.	Meena Kumari Lama	Nepal
25.	Hansika Agrawal	United States
26.	Febriyan Anindita	Indonesia
27.	Pranab Doley	India
28.	John Kiarie Mburu	Kenya
29.	Léon Mugisho	Congo {Democratic Rep}
30.	Joaquin F. Alano II	Philippines
31.	Jonathan Balome	Philippines
32.	Samson Kelu	Papua New Guinea