

PRESS RELEASE

Bulldozing the seabed: A grave threat to the common heritage of humankind

New Delhi, 6th April, 2021: India's proposed 'Deep Ocean Mission', a multi-ministerial, multi-disciplinary programme, to explore deep sea mining and the Continental Shelf will lead to colossal damage to our planet. It will not only have a disastrous impact on the ocean ecosystem but would also deeply impact the lives & livelihoods of the local communities. It is a threat to the common heritage of humankind¹!

We have already over-exploited and under-valued the land based mineral wealth in our country, an irreparable loss for the future generations and the biodiversity. Since there is very limited research and public debate around deep sea and marine environment that makes it difficult to assess the potential impacts of deep sea mining, it is in the best interest of the environment and people, to **place a moratorium to this proposal to extract minerals from deep sea.** Nandikesh Sivalingam, Director, Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) and a member of MIRA remarked, "Given our record on how we have dealt with environment destruction, pollution laws and community rights for surface mining, there is no evidence to suggest that deep sea mining would be done in any responsible manner".

A recent report (December, 2020), [Ocean Solutions That Benefit People, Nature and the Economy](#), commissioned by the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy cites some of the crucial points on Deep sea-bed mining, that needs to be taken into cognizance. It mentions:

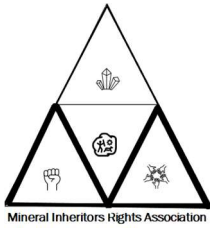
"Until the need for, and potential consequences of, deep-sea mining are better understood, the concept is conceptually difficult to align with the definition of a sustainable ocean economy and raises various environmental, legal and governance challenges, as well as possible conflicts with the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

It further elaborates, *"Current scientific understanding of deep-sea ecosystems—the range of species, their movements, ecological connectivity and susceptibility to mining stress—is still in its infancy. Deep-sea communities are known to recover from disturbance very slowly, if at all. The impact of deep-seabed mining on marine life—with its associated toxicity, dredging, noise and intense disturbance of the seafloor—is likely immense given the great longevity (thousands of years) and slow growth of many deep sea animals."*

Most importantly, it also mentions that, *"The profitability of national mining operations, without governmental support or comparably low taxes, remains questionable. If the operations are profitable, it will also raise questions about the equitable sharing of profits derived from a resource taken out of humanity's common heritage."*

Natalie Lowrey, [Deep Sea Mining Campaign](#) (an association of NGOs and citizens from the Pacific, Australia, Canada, and USA) who have been campaigning for 'No Deep Sea Mining' for the past decade mentions, *"There are currently no operating deep sea mining projects in the world. The only project to be given a green light to operate has left the [Papua New Government and other investors in debt](#) and*

¹ The 1967 World Peace through Law Conference referred to the high seas as "the common heritage of mankind", the responsibility of humans to care for and protect the environment, of which we are a part, for present and future generations.



*a chorus of opposition to the industry from [Churches, NGOs and coastal communities](#).” The more we explore the deep sea the more we are learning of the [complex eco-systems](#) that exist. Environmental concerns are being raised by governments, internationally recognised scientists and civil society across the globe. Over [90 organisations and individuals](#), the [European Parliament](#) and Pacific governments including [Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea](#) calling for a moratorium on deep sea mining. While others including [Sir David Attenborough](#) and the recently launched [The Pacific Blue Line](#) are calling for a ban globally. **We sincerely hope India join the call to halt exploration and exploitation of our deep seabeds.**”*

Last week, [Google, BMW, Volvo and Samsung](#) announced their support to a moratorium on deep seabed mining for minerals to be used in the electric vehicle batteries and other products. It is increasingly becoming evident that deep sea mining would have disastrous impacts on the environment and humankind.

We, the mineral inheritors, thus demand an end to the reckless exploitation of our rich mineral resources, a moratorium on deep sea mining and a strong mandate to protect these resources for our future generations. This will also reinstate our belief that the State is truly the trustee of our inherited wealth as mentioned in The National Mineral Policy 2019 that, “Natural resources, including minerals, are a shared inheritance where the state is the trustee on behalf of the people to ensure that future generations receive the benefit of inheritance.”

In solidarity,

Members of Mineral Inheritors Rights Association (MIRA)

(Mineral Inheritors Rights Association is an association of several civil society groups and networks in India working to ensure democracy, social justice, equity, transparency, and accountability in governance)