

WCC-2020-Res-122-EN

Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining

RECALLING that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) established the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to act on behalf of humankind as a whole and charged it with ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects of seabed mining activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ);

RECALLING UNCLOS Articles 136 and 145, Article 5 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the commitments of states to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 12 and 14;

RECALLING Resolution 5.079 *Protection of the deep ocean ecosystem and biodiversity from the threats of sea bed mining* (Jeju, 2012) urging all State Members of IUCN to facilitate the adoption of precautionary and ecosystem approaches, including the precautionary principle, with respect to deep-sea mining;

NOTING that the ISA has already approved 30 licences for the exploration of seabed minerals in ABNJ, and is working to adopt commercial mining regulations to enable applications from countries and companies for commercial mining permits in the international seabed area;

NOTING the need to ensure sufficient scientific information on deep-sea biodiversity and ecosystems and an appropriate and transparent institutional structure prior to adopting such regulations;

NOTING the warning of the 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services that up to a million species are threatened with extinction;

RECOGNISING advances in scientific knowledge since 2012 regarding deep-sea mining and concerns expressed by scientists that biodiversity loss will be inevitable if deep-sea mining is permitted to occur, that this loss is likely to be permanent on human timescales, and that the consequences for ocean ecosystem function are unknown;

CONSIDERING the unique, vulnerable character of deep ocean and seabed ecosystems, and their fundamental and intrinsic value to life on Earth;

NOTING the existence of studies that predict growth in the demand for minerals determined to be strategic, and considering that this demand should be met first through effective processes of a circular economy, so that the extraction of minerals (including from seabed mining) is carried out only when sources of materials from recycling or reuse are insufficient; and

NOTING commitments in SDGs 12, 13 and 14;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

CALLS on all State Members, individually and through relevant international fora, to:

a. support and implement a moratorium on deep seabed mining, issuing of new exploitation and new exploration contracts, and the adoption of seabed mining regulations for exploitation, including 'exploitation' regulations by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), unless and until:

i. rigorous and transparent impact assessments have been conducted, the environmental, social, cultural and economic risks of deep seabed mining are comprehensively understood, and the effective protection of the marine environment can be ensured;

ii. the precautionary principle, ecosystem approach, and the polluter pays principle have been implemented;

iii. policies to ensure the responsible production and use of metals, such as the reduction of demand for primary metals, a transformation to a resource-efficient circular economy, and responsible terrestrial mining practices, have been developed and implemented; and

iv. public consultation mechanisms have been incorporated into all decision-making processes related to deep-sea mining ensuring effective engagement allowing for independent review, and, where relevant, that the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples is respected and consent from potentially affected communities is achieved; and

b. promote the reform of the ISA to ensure transparent, accountable, inclusive, effective and environmentally responsible decision making and regulation.