

PRESS RELEASE  
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<http://ourcommonheritage.org>

## Oceans face ultimate threat from deep sea mining: urgent need for moratorium on deep sea mining exploration and exploitation

**Our international waters - known as the “common heritage of (human)kind” - are under a new, imminent, and most deadly threat from the deep sea mining industry.**

The International Seabed Authority (ISA), a UN agency which has not received much public scrutiny until now, meets in Kingston, Jamaica this week to discuss how to open up the deep sea bed to mining. Scientists, academics, and non-governmental organizations unite in a [joint letter](#) to raise alarm over this ultimate threat to our oceans.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Nnimmo Bassey, Director, HOMEF foundation and Alternative Nobel Prize recipient stated,** “Oceans play a critical role in maintaining life on the planet. However, the ISA continues to ignore the profound lack of scientific understanding of the immediate and long-term ecological costs of digging up the sea floor.

“It is evident that large private and state-owned conglomerates have succeeded in shifting the ISA's regulatory discussions toward outcomes favourable to corporate-directed industrial development.”<sup>[2]</sup>

“Our [joint letter](#) is a call from civil society globally to protect our common heritage.”

Renowned marine biologists, including Cindy Van Dover and colleagues, have recently pointed out that deep-sea mining would impact both the seabed and the water column, such that biodiversity loss would be both “unavoidable” and “likely to last forever on human timescales.”<sup>[3]</sup>

“The world’s seas are already on the brink of catastrophe from overfishing, pollution, such as from plastics and chemicals, destruction of critical habitat such as mangroves and coral reefs, global warming and acidification” **said Catherine Coumans of MiningWatch Canada.**

“The oceans cannot survive wide scale destruction of the sea bed by the same irresponsible industry that mines on land.”

The signers of the joint letter noted: “This is not the time to move forward with an extractive regime; there are far too many uncertainties. International leadership at the ISA is required to prevent recklessly proceeding with deep-sea mining.”

The ISA has already issued numerous exploration contracts in international waters to mining interests supported by member states of the ISA. As these exploration contracts come to an end, the ISA is considering implementing a regime to allow extraction.

**Raj Patel, Activist, New York Times best-selling author and Research Professor, University of Texas** claimed, “When the Law of the Sea was written and the idea of 'common inheritance' first framed, I'm certain that corporations weren't intended to inherit the seabed. There's little evidence that corporate stewardship is compatible with the continued, sustained health of these under-studied ecosystems.”

“The seabed is everyone's common inheritance, and we need broad, transnational and formal public consultation to learn and then decide how best to ensure its survival for those who will inherit it from us.”

**Rather than permitting deep sea mining the ISA must declare a moratorium on deep sea mining before irreparable damage is done to the health of the world’s oceans.**

[View and sign Letter](#) / [Download Letter](#)

#### For more information

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#### NOTES

[1] <http://outcommonheritage.org>. Download a PDF version of the letter: [http://ourcommonheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Our-Common-Heritage\\_ISA-Letter.pdf](http://ourcommonheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Our-Common-Heritage_ISA-Letter.pdf)

[2] For example, the British (wholly owned) subsidiary of Lockheed Martin (LMC) - a major global weapon manufacturers and on occasion the single largest contractor to the US military - is a significant actor at the ISA, holding contracts and acting in partnership with other deep sea mining firms.

[3] Biodiversity loss from deep-sea mining. C. L. Van Dover, J. A. Ardron, E. Escobar, M. Gianni, K. M. Gjerde, A. Jaeckel, D. O. B. Jones, L. A. Levin, H. J. Niner, L. Pendleton, C. R. Smith, T. Thiele, P. J. Turner, L. Watling & P. P. E. Weaver. *Nature Geoscience* volume 10, pages 464–465 (2017). [C. L. van Dover et al. Nature Geosci. 10, 464–465; 2017](#), quoted in *Nature* 557, 31 (2018), Sea-bed mining — count the true costs. Sebastian Losada & Pierre Terras, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-05016-0>