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While The Metals Company construct their own reality, commercial deep sea mining is a long way off

The Metals Company (TMC) continue to peddle their own version of reality, as they and their sponsoring state Nauru hold a gun to the head of governments at the International Seabed Authority (ISA), by threatening to submit their application to mine next year.

TMC held their [quarterly corporate update](#) last Thursday, just as the latest [ISA session](#) closed. TMC CEO Gerard Barron claimed the company is on track for its plans to launch commercial mining after the July 2024 ISA meeting, regardless of the state of the development of the regulations for exploitation, under a legal loop-hole called the [two-year rule](#). TMC's Chief Financial Officer, Craig Shesky, stated they [would force governments](#) to process their application."

Andy Whitmore, Deep Sea Mining Campaign's (DSMC) Finance Advocacy Officer asked: "How many sovereign states would cooperate with being forced by a single company into rushing a set of regulations for an unprecedented industry with unknown impacts in the context of world oceans already stressed to the max?"

"During the ISA meeting [the UK Government](#) joined the growing governmental chorus for a ban, moratorium or precautionary pause. The UK specifically stated that it "will not sponsor or support the issuing of any such licences until ... strong, enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines have been developed and adopted by the ISA."

In Barron's imagination the regulations are almost adopted. However the International Institute for Sustainable Development's [report on the meeting](#) stressed that its uncertain whether regulations will be adopted by the ISA 'roadmap' deadline of 2025. The report noted that "Delegates repeatedly stressed ... that no exploitation should take place without the full set of rules, regulations, and procedures in place."

"Another inconvenient truth for TMC is its tight cash flow, with cash-in-hand of \$22 million and expenses over the last 9 months totalling \$39.2 million" continued Andy Whitmore.

"Furthermore, just this month TMC narrowly avoided a third Nasdaq de-listing warning, with their share price hovering around the \$1 threshold. TMC is clearly in a rush to start mining before its money runs out, which should not be the reason to launch this unprecedented and high-risk form of resource extraction."

"It's notable that TMC has not updated its financial projections for downward changes in the price of nickel or upward changes in interest rates. They have also failed to account for the shift away from nodule metals by electric vehicle battery manufacturers. A [new report](#) released during the ISA council meeting demonstrates that electric vehicle batteries can be supplied to the world without mining the ocean floor,"



TMC has also [attempted to discredit](#) oceanographic modelling presented in [Blue Peril](#), a world first visual investigation predicting the impacts of deep sea mining that was conducted independently of mining interests. Predicting the scale and spread of plumes that would be generated by TMC in its Tonga and Nauru licence areas, *Blue Peril* calculates that it would take only 3 months for wastewater, that TMC plans to discharge at 1 km depth, to spread from its Tongan licence area to the national waters of Hawaii and Kiribati. TMC inaccurately compared the results of Blue Peril's modelling of the pollution discharge to research on sediment plumes generated by mining prototypes on the sea floor.

Dr Helen Rosenbaum, DSMC's Research Coordinator noted, "TMC are comparing apples with pears in a manner that suggests they don't understand the parameters of their own modelling, let alone the modelling in Blue Peril."

"This is a significant issue as the waste water pollution will release [alpha radioactive particles](#) and is likely to also contain heavy metals with implications for ecological and human food chains. TMC's misrepresentation of Blue Peril speaks to the lack of scientific rigour that characterises their whole endeavour. It also indicates that TMC are increasingly desperate given they have chosen to promote a destructive form of extraction for which the business case is rapidly disappearing."

For more Information:

Andy Whitmore, +44 7754 395597 andy@dsm-campaign.org

Dr Helen Rosenbaum, +61 413 201 793 helen.rosenbaum1@gmail.com