



Honourable Minister Mélanie Joly  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
Canada  
K1A 0A6  
Via email: melanie.joly@parl.gc.ca

June 9, 2023

Honourable Minister Joly,

**RE: Canada's delegation to the International Seabed Authority must be mandated to join the leadership countries calling for a moratorium or ban on deep seabed mining.**

We are member organizations of a [Canadian coalition of NGOs](#) committed to protecting marine biodiversity nationally and internationally. We are advocating for a commitment from the Government of Canada for both a national ban and international moratorium on deep sea mining.

We are writing to request a meeting on the topic of Canada's international position on deep sea mining and its negotiating mandate at the International Seabed Authority (ISA). It is urgent that Canada engage in a proactive manner in the upcoming ISA meetings in July 2023 where mining could be authorized for the first time in international waters, without a mining code in place.

In February 2023, Ministers Murray, Wilkinson, and Guilbeault announced, at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Conference (IMPAC5) held in Vancouver, Canada, that Canada's position on deep sea mining, in both Canadian waters and in international waters, was contingent only on regulations being in place.

As such, during ISA meetings in March 2023, Canada's mandate did not align with leadership states, Germany, France, Spain, New Zealand, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Vanuatu, Samoa, Ecuador, and Panama. These fourteen states are calling for a ban, moratorium, or precautionary pause on deep sea mining citing: the critical lack of scientific knowledge of the deep sea; the insufficient state of the draft regulations, standards, and guidelines at the ISA; the gulf of work left to create and implement a management body for the nascent industry; and [concerns over the credibility of the ISA](#). Moreover, opponents to deep sea mining are questioning the financial feasibility of the industry and the true benefit to humankind as a whole.

[These concerns are echoed by civil society, scientists, Indigenous groups, companies, financial institutions, and youth groups from around the world.](#) We know very little about deep sea ecosystems, which highlights the need for precaution; we cannot protect or regulate what we do not understand. Research is showing that the deep sea plays a crucial role in carbon sequestration, the marine food web, and global temperature and climate

regulation. The long-term economic fallout of destroying these ecosystems could dwarf whatever short term profits may come from the metals sourced from the seabed.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), states have an obligation to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment. The right to mine the international seabed does not trump the obligation to protect the marine environment, which is an obligation established in UNCLOS and supported by subsequent international agreements and commitments. In this vein, [international lawyers argue that it is not only consistent with UNCLOS for states to implement a moratorium, but necessary to do so, unless and until the necessary obligations under international law are met.](#)

In the wake of the CBD Kunming-Montreal Agreement and the finalization of the United Nations Treaty for Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), as well as in a landscape where the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Ocean Decade, and other ocean focused commitments are only becoming more important, it is crucial for Canada to be a leader on ocean issues. Therefore, we are requesting a meeting to discuss Canada's position on deep sea mining and how it relates to Canada's international environmental commitments as Global Affairs is the leading department on international ocean files.

We need Canada's voice championing ocean health for the benefit of humankind. Canada's delegation to the ISA meetings needs a mandate to position Canada to join the leadership countries calling for a moratorium or ban on deep seabed mining.

We would appreciate a meeting at the earliest possible time.

Sincerely,

Catherine Coumans,  
Co-manager  
MiningWatch Canada

Susanna Fuller  
Vice-President Operations and Projects  
Oceans North

Sarah King  
Head of Oceans and Plastics  
Greenpeace Canada

Nikki Skuce  
Director  
Northern Confluence Initiative

Cc. Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Natural Resources  
Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Honourable Joyce Murray, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard