



Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon  
Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations  
King Charles St, Westminster, London SW1A 2AH  
UK

Brussels, 18 July 2017

## Call on UK to cease its support to deep sea mining

Dear Minister,

We are writing to you to share our deep concerns about the role the UK is playing in supporting the development of deep sea mining. We would like to request you to 1) cease the sponsorship of exploration in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, 2) not to support requests for future exploitation licences 3) to ensure the International Seabed Authority strongly applies the precautionary principle.

The UK sponsors a deep sea mining exploration contract with the International Seabed Authority, and is thus actively promoting deep sea mining internationally. Following our request, we hope you will reconsider the UK's support for deep sea mining, and instead focus on making your country a champion on the protection of the deep sea.

Deep sea mining imposes a serious threat to global sustainability, and conflicts with several Sustainable Development Goals (the goals on oceans as well as the one on sustainable consumption and production). Many scientific warnings indicate that a strong application of the precautionary principle is urgently needed to; protect the deep sea from this emerging sector.

The deep sea is a fragile and vulnerable ecosystem, and the environmental impacts of deep sea mining will result in biodiversity loss, with the risk to be significant, wide spread and lasting for thousands of years, possibly forever. Contrasted to this, the socio- economic benefits (if any) are bound to be short lived. Huge gaps in scientific knowledge and the many uncertainties call for a strong precautionary approach, starting with a search for more sustainable alternatives.

Deep sea mining is not needed to meet future demand for minerals - it is merely driven by geo-political considerations. Sustainable alternatives are available. Reducing the demand for raw materials through better product design, sharing, re-use, repairing and recycling and development of new materials is key to the solution. As are changes in lifestyles. Every year in the EU, 100 million mobile phones go unused, less than 10% are recycled. This represents an enormous quantity of gold and other precious metals gone to waste. These figures indicate the huge potential of policies to increase resource efficiency world-wide.

Furthermore, the 2016 periodic review of the International Seabed Authority pointed to severe structural shortcomings in terms of its transparency and capacity, calling into question its ability to govern the deep sea effectively.



During the recent UN Oceans Conference, and supported by the Marine Conservation Society, the Environmental Investigation Agency and 35 other NGOs world-wide, Seas At Risk therefore called on the international community to stop deep sea mining in its tracks, and to focus on sustainable alternatives instead. The latter can be found in a full transition to sustainable consumption and production, a path on which the UK is already showing international leadership. Attached you find our statement for your consideration.

In August the member countries of the International Seabed Authority will vote on the recommendations regarding the review of the International Seabed Authority, as well as on the procedure for developing environmental regulation for exploitation. We hope the UK will defend a strong precautionary approach in this.

According to UNCLOS, the resources of the deep sea are the common heritage of humankind. We trust on your good stewardship to safeguard this heritage for future generations.

We would much appreciate a meeting with you to further clarify our request.

Yours sincerely,

Monica Verbeek  
Executive director  
Seas At Risk  
[mverbeek@seas-et-risk.org](mailto:mverbeek@seas-et-risk.org)

Sandy Luk  
Chief Executive Officer  
Marine Conservation Society

Clare Perry  
Head of Oceans Campaign  
Environmental Investigation  
Agency

Enclosed: Deep-sea mining has no place in a future shaped by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Statement for the Ocean Conference United Nations, New York, 5-9 June 2017

C.C. The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs