

Open Letter from Non-Governmental Organisations

Towards a True Blue Leadership: Belgium's Moment of Truth

A call for a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining

Dear Prime Minister Mr. de Wever, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Prévot, Minister of Labour and Economy Mr. Clarinival, Minister of Justice and North Sea Ms. Verlinden,

As international and national civil society organisations committed to the protection and restoration of the ocean, we are writing to urge Belgium to publicly support a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining.

We welcome your government's strong advocacy for the BBNJ Agreement and note your active campaign to host its Secretariat in Brussels signals an ambition to place Belgium at the heart of global ocean stewardship.

The BBNJ Agreement was established on the understanding that the ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction are treasures to protect for humankind as a whole. It represents a global commitment to protect marine biodiversity, to act on the best available science, and to ensure that activities in the high seas are governed by precaution, equity, and shared responsibility.

Deep-sea mining stands in stark contradiction to these norms. While the BBNJ Agreement seeks to safeguard marine ecosystems, deep-sea mining would cause irreversible harm to fragile and largely unexplored deep-sea environments. It threatens to destroy habitats that have evolved over millennia, disrupt the carbon cycle and generate vast sediment plumes that could disrupt food webs well beyond the mined area. The scientific understanding of these systems remains limited, with leading experts indicating we are still 10-15 years away from having the baseline knowledge needed to make an informed decision about deep-sea mining. Therefore, a pause on deep-sea mining is perfectly in line with the precautionary principle and UNCLOS, which stipulates that activities should cause no harm to the marine environment.

For Belgium to seek the honour of hosting the BBNJ Secretariat while it has not joined the **40 and growing number of states that have supported a ban, moratorium or precautionary pause** on deep-sea mining sends a contradictory signal to the international community, undermining the credibility and legitimacy of Belgium's ocean diplomacy.

Amongst these countries are Germany and France which continue to act as constructive bridgebuilders in the negotiations at the International Seabed Authority. The European Commission's Ocean Pact as well as several resolutions in

[the European Parliament](#) call on Member States to back such a pause until sufficient scientific knowledge is in place and until it is demonstrated that deep-sea mining would cause no harm to marine ecosystems.

In 2026, Belgium will be in the global spotlight not only for its BBNJ Secretariat candidacy, but also as it hosts the 7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity, showcasing its commitment to ocean stewardship and sustainability. This year offers Belgium a key opportunity to demonstrate genuine and true **Blue Leadership**. Such leadership **requires a clear and unequivocal political statement supporting a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining**. This would clearly demonstrate that Belgium listens to science and honours its international commitments.

With respect and appreciation for Belgium's continued commitment to the ocean, we stand ready to engage in dialogue and cooperation on how this blue leadership can be reaffirmed and advanced.

Sincerely,

AbibiNsroma Foundation	Kiwis Against Seabed Mining (KASM)
Acción Océanos	KYMA sea conservation & research
AIPNEE - Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive industries and Energy	Look Down
Amnesty Canada	Marine Conservation Institute
Bantay Kita Philippines	Marine conservation society
Bloom	MiningWatch Canada
Bond Beter Leefmilieu	Natagora
Canopea	North Sea Foundation
ClientEarth	OceanCare
Deep Sea Conservation Coalition	Polish Zero Waste Association
Deep Sea Mining Campaign	PowerShift
DEEPWAVE	Reset.Vlaanderen
Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz	Sciaena
Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.	Seas At Risk
ECOS	SPLENDEUR NATURE
Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	Sustainable Ocean Alliance
Fondation Européenne pour le droit du Vivant	Te Ipukarea Society
Friends of the Earth Europe	The Ocean and Us
GEOTA-Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente	Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen
Greenpeace Belgium	vzw Climaxi
IFAW	WeMove Europe
	Whale and Dolphin Conservation
	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)



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