

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. Clarinval, 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

Acción Océanos

AIPNEE - Asia Indigenous Peoples Network
on Extractive industries and Energy

Amnesty Canada

Bantay Kita Philippines

Bloom

Bond Beter Leefmilieu

Canopea

ClientEarth

Deep Sea Conservation Coalition

Deep Sea Mining Campaign

DEEPWAVE

Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz

Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.

ECOS

Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

Fondation Européenne pour le droit du

Vivant

Friends of the Earth Europe

GEOTA-Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento
do Território e Ambiente

Greenpeace Belgium

IFAW

Kiwis Against Seabed Mining (KASM)

KYMA sea conservation & research

Look Down

Marine Conservation Institute

Marine conservation society

MiningWatch Canada

Natagora

North Sea Foundation

OceanCare

Polish Zero Waste Association

PowerShift

Reset.Vlaanderen

Sciaena

Seas At Risk

SPLendeur NATURE

Sustainable Ocean Alliance

Te Ipukarea Society

The Ocean and Us

Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen

vzw Climaxi

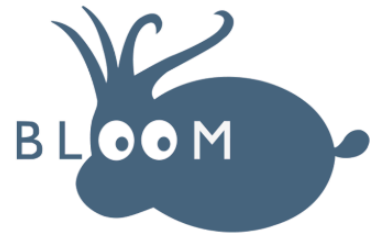
WeMove Europe

Whale and Dolphin Conservation

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)



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