



Side Event of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council

# Deep Seabed Mining and Human Rights

28 March 2024

13.00-15.00

Room XXII, Palais des Nations

The ocean moderates the climate, influences our weather and supports rich and diverse cultural practices, food security and livelihoods. All life on earth is dependent upon healthy ocean ecosystems.

Deep Seabed Mining (DSM) is the extraction of mineral deposits from the deep sea (mostly in the High Seas). There is mounting scientific evidence that if DSM becomes an industry, it will have irreversible environmental consequences for fisheries, tourism, Indigenous Peoples, coastal communities' livelihoods and ocean ecosystems already being stressed to breaking point by the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Even where scientific evidence is not conclusive, the application of the precautionary principle requires States to act cautiously and diligently to avoid steps that may cause harm to human health or the environment. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a [brief on the topic](#) of DSM, confirming a connection between, and the potential for negative impact, from this quickly developing industry on human rights.

DSM can negatively impact the human rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, life, health, food, water, housing, work, self-determination, and cultural rights, among others. These adverse impacts are likely to be felt most by Indigenous Peoples, coastal and island communities, and people who depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, (for reference between 10-40% of the global population depends on or lives close to the ocean) and whose traditional and spiritual beliefs are linked to the deep sea. Given most of the seabed is the common heritage of humankind, proposals to permit resource extraction by business enterprises pose particular governance concerns.

While governments are in the process of negotiating the commercial exploitation of the minerals on the seabed, views representing the wide range of stakeholders potentially impacted are often missing in these discussions.

The aim of this event is to introduce and explore the links and considerations between DSM and human rights with relevant experts. How the impact of DSM on the environment might lead to adverse impacts on human rights, in particular the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and related rights, and what the current industrial sector should plan to manage this risk.

**Proposed agenda:**

13.00 Arrival and sandwich lunch

13.15 Opening remarks

**Ms. Dona Bertarelli**, Chair, Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy [\[info\]](#)

**H.E. Ms. Doreen de Brum**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

13.20 Screening of Deep Rising by Matthieu Rytz and narrated by Jason Momoa [\[info\]](#)

13.40 Introduction to Deep Seabed Mining and panel discussion with participation from:

**Prof. Elisa Morgera**, Professor, University of Strathclyde [\[info\]](#)

**Dr. Holly Niner**, Research Fellow, University of Plymouth and member of IUCN's Deep sea mining specialist group [\[info\]](#)

**Ms. Jessica Battle**, Senior Expert, Global Ocean Policy and Governance and Lead Deep Seabed Mining Initiative at WWF [\[info\]](#)

**Mr. Benjamin Schachter**, Coordinator, Environment and Climate Change Team, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Mr. Bruno Bischoff**, Head of ESG Risk Advisory, ECOFACT [\[info\]](#)

14.15 Q&A with the panellists

14.45 Closing remarks

**Moderation:**

**Mr. Emmanuel Bichet**, Special Envoy of Switzerland for the Pacific Region