



Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

## **Namibian Government's Moratorium on Seabed Mining Sets an International Standard in Protecting of Our Oceans**

The Deep Sea Mining campaign has written to the Namibian Government to congratulate and welcome the recent decision to place a moratorium on marine phosphate seabed mining in Namibia's coastal waters.

The Deep Sea Mining campaign applauds the Namibian Government's decision to:

- impose a moratorium for 18 months on marine phosphate mining;
- demand a scoping study to be finalised for the Environmental Assessment of phosphate mining in Namibian coastal waters; and
- call for a Strategic Environmental Assessment

The foresight shown by the Namibian Government will have a positive impact on the health of Namibia's coastal waters for future generations. It will protect marine ecosystems, local coastal communities and the livelihoods that are supported by Namibia's fishing industries, which generate 5.5 per cent of the country's GDP and employ 13,000 people.

The Australian-based Deep Sea Mining campaign<sup>[1]</sup> has been building alliances, producing reports and supporting the work of communities throughout the Pacific and internationally that are concerned about the impacts of seabed mining.

Through the work of Swakopmund Matters<sup>[2]</sup> and The Earth Organisation Namibia<sup>[3]</sup>, the Deep Sea mining campaign was made aware of Namibia Marine Phosphate's (NMP) project<sup>[4]</sup> and its potential to destroy the marine environment and Namibia's vital fishing industry.

We acknowledge the hard and persistent work of these organisations in pushing for a moratorium on phosphate seabed mining and highlighting the inadequate public and scientific consultation as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process. This process was not in accordance with Namibian law, International Seabed Authority guidelines, or International Best Practice standards.

This decision places Namibia as a world leader in implementing the precautionary principle -in regards to ~~any~~ seabed mining. The seabed mining industry must provide solid proof that its activities will not impact the environment negatively.

In Australia, the Northern Territory Government reached a similar decision in June this year to stop any future seabed mining<sup>[5]</sup> in waters around Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Northern Territory government stated that seabed mining is still an unproven science and could damage the environment. This

total ban on seabed mining has put local communities and the environment above business concerns.

We encourage the Namibian government to also impose a complete ban on seabed mining if it cannot be conclusively proven that seabed mining will not negatively impact Namibian coastal waters and local communities.

Helen Rosenbaum and Natalie Lowrey  
on behalf of the Deep Sea Mining campaign  
<http://deepseaminingoutofourdepth.org>

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[1] The Deep Sea Mining (DSM) Campaign (<http://www.deepseaminingoutofourdepth.org/>) is an association of NGOs and citizens from Melanesia, Australia and Canada concerned about the likely impacts of DSM on marine and coastal ecosystems and communities. The goal of our campaign is to achieve Free Prior and Informed Consent from affected communities and the application of the precautionary principle in decision-making about DSM.

[2] Statement from Swakopmund Matters, "The message conveyed by the Namibian decision is bold and clear. It will resonate throughout the world where battles are being fought against actions by mining companies that will harm, if not destroy, important marine areas. It will embolden all those who are standing up for the protection of their marine environments. But even more important, it will demonstrate to other governments that environmental concerns do take precedent over companies' questionable actions when it comes to their exploitation of the oceans. Furthermore, that the Namibia government is not prepared to be a guinea pig for an untested and unknown endeavour. It refused to let its ocean and marine resources become the proverbial experimental playground."

[3] 'Marine Phosphate Mining Has Been Banned', Thursday 19 September 2013, The Earth Organisation Namibia  
[http://earthorganizationnamibia.blogspot.com.au/2013/09/marine-phosphate-mining-has-been-banned\\_19.html](http://earthorganizationnamibia.blogspot.com.au/2013/09/marine-phosphate-mining-has-been-banned_19.html)

[4] The project of Namibia Marine Phosphate (NMP) is called Sandpiper Marine Phosphate Project (SMPP) and will focus on an area south of Walvis Bay Originally two Australian companies (Minemakers & UCL Resources) were the original major share holders with 85% shared equally amongst the two of them. That left NMP with only 15%. In December 2012 Minemakers sold its 42,5% share to Mawarid Mining of Oman. Still leaving the Namibian component of the company with only 15%.

[5] On 6 March 2012, the Northern Territory Government placed a moratorium on conducting both exploration and sea bed mining in the coastal waters of the Northern Territory. The moratorium was placed until 2015, while a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts of such activities is undertaken. In June this year the Northern Territory Government placed a total ban on seabed mining around Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria having listened to the concerns of traditional owners about destruction of the seabed and "cultural songlines".  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-12/groote-eylandt-seabed-mining-total-ban-nt-govt/4749576>