

To: Rt Hon **Lord Goldsmith** of Richmond Park, Minister for Pacific and the Environment
via email

cc: Rt Hon **Boris Johnson**, Prime Minister; Rt Hon **Kwasi Kwarteng**, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Rt Hon **Dominic Raab**, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs; Rt Hon **Alok Sharma**, COP26 President

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 23 March 2021 regarding the UK government's position on deep sea mining.

We welcome your continued commitment to putting the health of our seas, oceans and marine habitats at the heart of the UK's international agenda.

We particularly welcome the strong commitments to the Global Ocean Alliance, to the new Blue Planet Fund, and to the Blue Belt Programme for UK Overseas Territories, set out in the recent Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. To see UK efforts to tackle climate change and halt biodiversity loss at the very heart of policy-making was hugely encouraging. The government's announcement in April of plans to cut carbon emissions by 78% by 2035 was also a significant and positive step; emblematic of the special role the UK can play on the international stage in this 'Super Year' of environmental action.

As co-host of COP26 and President of the G7, the UK has a unique ability to galvanise decisive action internationally this year; to be among the first-movers on the global stage in taking the bold steps required to tackle climate change and to protect and restore biodiversity on land and at sea.

For that reason, we urge you to reconsider the UK's position on deep sea mining and to support increasingly urgent calls – from scientists, from business and from civil society – for a global moratorium. We believe that by doing so this year, as G7 president, (and by urging allies to do the same) the UK has a unique opportunity to make a statement that would resonate around the world and dramatically raise global ambitions in our collective fight to halt biodiversity loss and tackle climate change.

The evidence of the destructive impact deep sea mining will have on seabed ecosystems and the marine food webs they support is already abundantly clear. The profound concerns of scientists and environmentalists, including Sir David Attenborough, about the potential consequences for the health of the entire ocean and our ability to combat climate change – should deep sea mining be allowed to proceed at scale in international waters – are being heard far and wide, well beyond the environmental movement.

Since your letter of 23 March, tech leaders like Google and Samsung SDI and manufacturers like BMW and Volvo have spoken out in support of a moratorium, believing, as we do, that uncertainties about the wider impacts of deep-sea mining are so profound – and the potential risks so grave – that no such activities should take place anywhere in the world until the environmental risks have been comprehensively investigated and understood. At the same time, the mining companies that seek to exploit seabed minerals have stepped up their efforts to raise financial backing for exploitation contracts and have sought (with dubious reasoning and in the face of objections from virtually every leading environmental group) to portray the new industry in the media as a 'green' source of metals needed for electric vehicle batteries. There are (as several forward-thinking companies have

already realised) many alternative sources of such metals. The idea we 'need' deep sea mining for a clean energy future is simply false.

We note and welcome that the UK government, as Council member of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), has adopted a position emphasising the need to ensure high environmental standards in the development of this new industry. But the clock is ticking. As you know, should the ISA receive an application from a member state sponsoring a mining company for a contract to exploit in international waters, it has just two years to draw up the regulations necessary to grant that contract. If the ISA does not achieve this in two years, a provisional contract is automatically granted. Therefore, no matter what the good intentions of governments, like the UK, who want to see a proper regulatory framework in place, there is a clear risk that the increasingly vocal mining companies (and any member state that wishes to back them) could put the world on a fast-track to poorly-regulated deep sea mining in international waters – with unknown and potentially irreversible consequences for oceans and for the climate.

That is why a moratorium matters; not just as a policy approach, but as a message to the UK's allies around the world and to mining companies that countries and businesses that truly believe in halting biodiversity loss and tackling climate change don't just pay lip service; they back the policy approaches most likely to protect the planet – regardless of the loss in potential profits.

The 'Super Year 2021' can be a moment when the countries, businesses and citizens of the world reach a turning point in our relationship with nature. Whereas so often before our species has rushed headlong to exploit without reflecting on the possible consequences, a new precautionary spirit should now define our stewardship of the natural world and natural resources. Our attitude to this new industry is an historic test of whether we really have changed – and the UK is uniquely well-placed to help the world rise to it.

Yours sincerely,



**BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION**



DEUTSCHE STIFTUNG
MEERESSCHUTZ (DSM)



**ecologistas
en acción**



Protecting People and Planet



**FAUNA & FLORA
INTERNATIONAL**



GRD
Gesellschaft zur Rettung
der Delphine e.V.

GREENPEACE

Continued overleaf...

