

Proposed French Polynesia Deep Sea Mining Moratorium

The health of our planet depends on the health of our oceans. Covering more than 70% of the Earth and representing 95% of the biosphere, the oceans are the refuge of a unique biodiversity, the allies in our fight against climate change, and a place belonging to the culture of many communities around the world.

As threats to the health of our oceans grow, including from climate change, overfishing, plastic pollution and offshore drilling, the oceans are facing a new greed: deep-sea mining. Prospective deep-sea mining companies and state sponsors are racing to mine the seabed for minerals including nickel, cobalt, copper, manganese and rare earths.

Already, many scientists are alerting us to unreasonable exploitation that could lead to a loss of biodiversity and irreversible damage to the functioning of ecosystems over several generations.

In Fenua, our government has chosen an original way of protecting and sustainably managing our spaces and our species. Pragmatic and inspired by millennia of traditional know-how. This approach aims to promote a development model combining economic development and a sustainable and inclusive development model that integrates generations and all our archipelagos.

Through *Tainui àtea*, the protection and sustainable management of our EEZ is carried out within the framework of a management plan approved in April 2020, respecting the following guidelines:

- Preserve, maintain in a good state of conservation and if necessary, restore the marine natural heritage, exploited or not, as well as the multiple and specific functionalities of natural ecosystems, in particular spawning grounds, nurseries, breeding areas, migration corridors at sea, etc.;
- Promote and develop fishing activities aimed at the sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources, while respecting marine ecosystems;
- Develop sustainable marine activities based on a rational exploitation of living, mineral or energy resources of the sea, as well as leisure uses and traditional uses of the sea that convey Polynesian identity; find a harmonious cohabitation between all these uses and remain open to new uses;
- Improve knowledge through research, participatory science or traditional knowledge systems, raise awareness, raise awareness, popularize to contribute to the preservation of marine and underwater landscapes, traditional practices and know-how related to the sea, values and cultural property associated with the sea;
- Ensure coordinated and partnership management with the management authorities of the protected natural areas included or contiguous to this protected area;
- Develop political and technical cooperation with neighboring countries for joint protection of maritime space and its natural resources as well as sustainable development of maritime activities, particularly in the Pacific region;
- Contribute to the influence of French Polynesia in the Pacific, throughout France, Europe and internationally.

In this context, it is certainly logical and responsible to refuse, today, the mining of the deep Polynesian seabeds even before knowing perfectly the ins and outs of it. Furthermore, our strong dependence on the good health of our ocean to ensure food self-sufficiency and harmonious economic and social development encourages me to remain cautious.

In addition, French Polynesia lists 509 seamounts, for which I have already wished, in partnership with the French Office for Biodiversity (OFB), to produce a summary of all the studies already carried out at their about. Some seamounts have always been used traditionally as a fishing reserve.

All this knowledge, traditional and scientific, should guide us.

Given all of the above, I would like to propose for the opinion of the CESEC and then for the approval of the representatives to the Assembly of French Polynesia, a moratorium on the mining of the deep seabed.

Written in the form of a Solemn Declaration of the Assembly of French Polynesia, I would like this moratorium to be maintained until:

- rigorous and transparent impact assessments have been conducted, the environmental, social, cultural and economic risks of deep seabed mining have been fully understood and managed, and the effective protection of the marine environment, its restoration or compensation losses of natural capital are guaranteed;
- the precautionary principle, the ecosystem-based approach, and the polluter-pays principle are implemented;
- policies to ensure the responsible production and use of metals, such as reducing demand for primary metals, moving towards a resource-efficient circular economy, and responsible land mining practices have been developed and implemented;
- public consultation mechanisms have been included in all decision-making processes related to deep seabed mining, ensuring effective engagement allowing for independent assessment and ensuring that free, prior and informed consent of local populations is obtained and respected.

In the meantime, I suggest considering a strategy for acquiring knowledge of our deep seabed, including the traditional knowledge of our local populations, in order to inventory and map its wealth. I would like to take this opportunity to rename our various sites with their vernacular names.

This is the subject of the draft deliberation which I have the honor to submit for your approval.