R6new Deep-sea mining

Proposers:

Agenda item: 4. Resolutions

Motion text

Mining resources comes with negative impacts on the environment that should be reduced to a minimum. At the same time, a just transition to a carbon-neutral society is only possible when key parts of our infrastructure are renewed. However, this transition requires mining resources in itself; cadmium is for example needed for the construction of solar panels. Some methods of mining are more harmful to the environment than other methods. Underwater mining is especially harmful to the environment and should therefore be prohibited.

According to "Seas to risk" report: "*Areas approved for deep-sea mining (DSM) exploration now cover over 1.3 million square kilometres in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Of the 30 exploration contracts the International Seabed Authority (ISA) has established so far, European contractors hold a total of nine. Countries sponsoring or holding contracts include Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, France, Germany and the UK*".

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has launched a moratorium on deep-sea mining. It has called on its member states to implement a moratorium on deep-sea mining and the issuance of contracts for exploitation and exploration. Environmental and biodiversity NGOs have welcomed this measure.

But many European countries continue the race to exploit the mineral resources of the seabed even though this has devastating consequences on the 250,000 known living species and on the millions we do not yet know of and the fact that mining releases huge amounts of carbon, which reduces the capacity of the oceans to slow down climate change.

We can mention the Solwara 1 project planned to mine mineral-rich hydrothermal vents in the Bismarck Sea, part of the Pacific Ocean, not far from Bougainville Island. This is the first deep-sea mining project at the international level that was approved but then brought to a halt because of environmental destruction. Other tentative projects are the ones planned near the Canary Islands. The so-called "grandmothers of the Canary Islands" are composed of more than 100 seamounts that cover the bottom of the sea, located about 269 miles

south of the island of El Hierro. They are extinct submarine volcanoes with important mineral deposits of manganese crusts, polymetallic nodules, and phosphorites. The European Union has formally declared that the grandmothers of the Canary Islands are a strategic reserve of raw materials necessary for the energy transition.

On the other hand, European countries and the EU have made the security of the supply of raw materials one of their priorities. It encourages the exploration of new frontiers and innovative mining methodsunder the pretext that the ecological transition requires the use of rare minerals such as cobalt used for the batteries of electrical devices.

We refuse to use the ecological transition to go and exploit and destroy the seabed!

The "Sustainable Blue Economy" strategy adopted by the European Commission foresees that the EU defends the conditional exploitation of seabed mineral resources in the international area after sufficient research has been carried out on the impact on the marine environment, biodiversity, and human activities.

The Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) is unambiguous: our biodiversity has to be protected – whether on land or underground.

We must make our continent a global leader in sustainable development. When building a sustainable Europe, we cannot forget to protect our seabed.

WHAT WE STAND FOR:

- Ban on deep-sea mining in European waters as well as on the continent.

- Ban on processing minerals from the seabed in Europe and ban on importing products containing minerals from the seabed into Europe (similar to the ban on conflict minerals).

- Ban private deep-sea mining research projects and those for economic purposes, and only fund public deep-sea science research projects, such as those by academia and international institutions, that look into sustainable methods and contribute to our understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, in order to form a scientific consensus that deep sea mining can be done sustainably.

- Increase waste recycling rates to 80% to recover raw materials and facilitate recycling across Member States, by giving Member States with the capacity to mass-recycle the possibility to buy disposed material from other Member States. Special attention is given to the recycling of e-waste, thus precious minerals and metals used for the production of technology in order to phase-out mining. To increase and improve waste recycling, European legislation should require producers to design products so that they can be easily recycled, for example by not mixing plastic with paper packaging.

- Producers have to sell products designed to last as long as possible. Producing products that stop working after an artificially short amount of time is not only a burden for the consumers, but also the environment since it increases demand for new products, and therefore resources. To alleviate the pressure on our environment, and to reduce the need for underwater mining, artificial lifetime limitations, including negligent or avoidable obsolescence, must be banned across Europe. To stimulate the production and purchase of sustainable products, the lifespan of consumer technologies has to be included on its packaging.

- Enabling a local and decentralized repair industry on national and European level, by providing financial and educational incentives to create local repair shops that can perform repairs on the widest range of goods possible at the lowest prices possible.

- Ban the design of products that can exclusively be repaired by the manufacturers of the product.

- The right to repair must be enshrined in European law. All consumer technologies should be able to be repaired by consumers themselves when needed. This includes creating legislation that sets minimum design requirements to ensure easy disassembly and replacement of key components. Similarly, producing products that are difficult or impossible to be repaired is a burden for consumers and the environment as it leads to unnecessary excess demand.

We call for respect for the biodiversity of the seabed and respect for the right of marine biodiversity to develop freely without human intervention.

Through this motion, we want to affirm our refusal to participate in this race for scarce resources which is destructive to our marine biodiversity and which brings nothing.