

## MEDIA STATEMENT

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2022

# NEW DEEP SEA MINER WANTS TO PUSH AHEAD WITH SOLWARA 1 PROJECT

Community leaders across Papua New Guinea call for seabed mining to be banned and all licenses cancelled



PAPUA NEW GUINEA | On 4 October 2022 local communities in New Ireland Province discovered that a joint venture company had bought off Nautilus Minerals assets. The joint venture companies involved, Deep Sea Mining Finance and Sustainable Mining Solutions are pushing decision-makers in Papua New Guinea to open up the Solwara 1 deep sea mining project in the Bismarck Sea.

According to Jonathan Mesulam, Director of West Coast Development Foundation, and member of the Alliance of Solwara Warriors the companies have been in the country and meeting with the government since May this year (2022).

“When is the PNG Government going to make its stance very clear on the issue of seabed mining in PNG and stop secret meetings with deep sea miners behind closed doors?”

“We are all aware that the Solwara 1 project has cost the people of Papua New Guinea [more than K375m](#). It was declared a [failed project](#) by former PM Peter O’Neill back in 2019. Why is the government still silent on this issue?” continued Mr. Mesulam.

“We are raising these questions because it seems that the Marape-Rosso government does not have the guts to come out publicly to share the latest developments surrounding the Solwara 1 project – despite PM Marape [backing Fiji PM Bainimarama's call for a moratorium](#) at the Pacific Island Forum in 2019.”



For over a decade there has been resistance against seabed mining across PNG from civil society, local communities, churches, and educated elites. The Alliance of Solwara Warriors is very concerned that the PNG government and provincial governments of New Ireland and East New Britain have not listened to the people and are risking lives, livelihoods and the Bismarck Sea.

“Coastal and low-lying island and atoll communities of PNG are already severely impacted by climate change with rising sea levels and food security issues. Seabed mining is another additional burden. Our ocean must be protected at all costs,” stated Mr. Mesulam.

John Momori of Caritas Kavieng Diocese who also back a complete ban on seabed mining stated, “Despite Nautilus Minerals [going bankrupt in 2019](#), their existing exploration and mining licenses are still active across the Bismarck and Solomon Seas. Since 2019 we have been calling for the licenses to be cancelled and for the government to place a ban on seabed mining.”

In the last two weeks, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) negotiations took place in Kingston, Jamaica. However, the ISA’s push to move forward on deep sea mining in international waters has [been stymied](#) by the [growing call](#), not only from civil society, scientists, and corporations globally but a growing number of parliamentarians and [governments](#) are now calling for a pause, moratorium or complete ban on the industry.

“Deep sea mining is not wanted!” claimed Mr. Momori.

“The PNG Government should be following in the footsteps of other Pacific states like Fiji, Samoa, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia which have now been joined by New Zealand, France, Germany, Spain, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, and Chile in calling for a pause, moratorium or complete ban,”

“Instead the PNG government is lagging behind both Pacific and international leaders.”

**As concerned PNG citizens and under the banner of the Alliance of Solwara Warriors representing communities in New Ireland, East New Britain, Manus, Madang, Alotau and Bougainville we now called on the Marape-Rosso government to:**

- 1. Stand with other nations across the world to say no to seabed mining**
- 2. Make public statements on the government’s position at national and high-level conferences like the COP27 taking place in Egypt this month**
- 3. Cancel all existing seabed exploration and mining licenses in Papua New Guinea**

“We also call on our political leaders in our respective coastal provinces to come out publicly and state their position on the issue of seabed mining,” concluded Mr. Mesulam.

**For more information**

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