

New Study on the Future of the Global Seafloor

The ocean hosts an inconceivable wealth of marine life and diverse habitats, most of which remains unknown and unseen. International plans to mine minerals from the deep seafloor threaten this largely unexplored biodiversity hotspot. States are currently seeking to develop a legal framework for deep seabed mining. In cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, an international team of researchers from the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) has published a new study warning against a rush to exploit deep seafloor resources and calling for coordinated efforts to develop alternative approaches.

The international community is currently developing a legal framework for the management of deep seabed mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Prior to agreeing such a framework and before potentially harmful mining activities could commence States need to achieve a common global understanding of the rights and obligations of different actors regarding the seafloor. This is the recommendation of an international team of authors from the IASS, TMG – ThinkTank for Sustainability, the University of Auckland, and Globelaw.

The future governance of these areas, the authors argue, should be guided by their internationally recognized status as a "common heritage of mankind". In light of this, particular consideration must be given to the conservation of ecosystems and the question of whether and how deep seafloor resources could be used sustainably.

The study makes a strong case for greater coordination to ensure that the development of a legal framework for deep seafloor mining under the auspices of the International Seabed Authority – the institution responsible for managing activities in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction – do not hamper ongoing UN negotiations for a new international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. The conservation and exploitation of the deep sea should not be negotiated in separation, the international governance researchers concluded.

Read the complete study here: <https://www.boell.de/en/2019/11/11/towards-contemporary-vision-global-seafloor-implementing-common-heritage-mankind>

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