

# **SCIENTISTS CALL FOR URGENT PROTECTION OF DEEP SEA IN THE FACE OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Ahead of UNFCCC COP27 starting in Egypt, a new scientific report highlights the important role of the deep ocean in mitigating climate change and warns of the serious threats the deep sea faces from human activity, including deepwater oil & gas extraction, deep-sea trawling, and the emerging deep-sea mining industry. “Undisturbed: the deep ocean’s vital role in safeguarding us from crises”, published today, and co authored by leading scientists, emphasizes the crucial role that the deep ocean plays in our planet.**

Scientists from the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory at the University of California Santa Barbara, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and the International Programme on the State of the Ocean, investigated the threats to deep-ocean health in the new paper and warn of the urgent need to tackle these key threats - or risk disrupting the vital ecosystem services provided by the deep ocean.

Dr Lisa Levin, Distinguished Professor emeritus at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, one of the report's authors, stated, "The global push to reduce emissions and enhance carbon storage and mitigation creates a critical juncture to highlight the deep ocean's climate contribution and the need to protect it." Dr Levin added: "Any harm caused by human activities in the deep, would interact with and aggravate climate change impacts, lowering the resilience of deep-sea creatures and ecosystems even further."

The report's findings come at a pivotal time for the ocean and climate, just days before the UN global climate conference, COP27, begins in Egypt next week and ahead of the UN biodiversity conference, COP15, due to take place in Montreal in a few weeks. Meanwhile, government representatives are meeting for the next two weeks in Jamaica for an International Seabed Authority meeting to negotiate rules and regulations that if agreed and adopted, could see the deep ocean opened up for commercial deep-sea mining as soon as July 2023.

Dr. Diva Amon, a National Geographic Explorer and deep-sea biologist at the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory, warned of the dangers of the emerging mining industry, stating "if allowed to proceed, deep-sea mining would inevitably lead to biodiversity loss and species extinctions on a massive geographical and temporal scale." More than 650 scientists and policy experts from across the world have come together to call for a global pause to the industry in the face of the risks it poses to nature and climate, including carbon cycling and storage in the deep.

Mirella von Lindenfels of the International Programme on the State of the Ocean stated "we need to get back into balance with blue nature and protect the deep ocean. It is our greatest ally against climate change and should be urgently and immediately protected from exploitation and threat."

The report urges others to grasp the unique opportunity provided by international negotiations currently underway including UNFCCC climate agreements and High Seas Treaty Negotiations. Dr Amon added: “These converging processes present the global community with a unique opportunity to work together, draw a line in the sand, and take concrete action to protect one of our greatest allies in the climate crisis. Through holistic science and evidence-based, integrated governance, we can protect this critical and still relatively pristine part of the planet.”

**ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

Key recommendations from the report include:

1. Pausing all industrial activities that disturb the deep seafloor, lead to biodiversity loss, and risk disruption of irreplaceable ecosystem services, including deepwater oil & gas extraction, deep-sea trawling, and deep-seabed mining.
2. Promoting robust deep-sea research that is independent of extractive industry agendas.
3. Establishing and expanding climate-smart Marine Protected Areas that are designed to boost climate resilience.
4. Adopting policies and strategies that support the protection of deep-ocean ecosystem services and take a precautionary approach to avoid irreversible losses of those services.
5. Developing ocean-based climate interventions and strategies that conserve carbon and avoid significant or irreversible damage to the deep sea.
6. Managing fisheries for climate, and vice versa, by paying attention to the role of fish in carbon storage, with management of stocks incorporating climate-induced changes.
7. Adopting, implementing and magnifying international agreements and regulations that can jointly address biodiversity and climate change, including UNFCCC climate agreements, High Seas Treaty Negotiations, and RFMO deep-sea fisheries impact assessments.

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