

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **SOPAC framework on deep seabed mining will disenfranchise Pacific Peoples'**

NGO's across the Pacific, criticise The Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SOPAC) proposal for a legislative and regulatory framework for deep sea mineral exploration and mining.

With Nautilus Mineral's Solwara 1 project in PNG scheduled to start mining in 2013, there is a growing international alliance of NGO's and civil society pushing for a halt to this latest display of greed.

Effrey Dademo, ACT NOW! PNG Program Manager, said, "The drafting of laws to facilitate experimental deep seabed mining disenfranchises Pacific peoples' who have not yet made an informed decision on whether they want to be the guinea pigs for this industry."

"SOPAC has not consulted or gained consent from local communities in PNG, some of which have been resisting against Nautilus Minerals Solwara 1 project since 2008. Landowners under their customary rights do take claim to resources not just on land but also the sea."

Wences Magun, national coordinator for Mas Kagin Tapani in Papua New Guinea said, "Our coastal and offshore island people depend on our marine resources for survival. It is our "supermarket". Any negative impact caused to the marine environment will have detrimental negative impact on our lives and the lives of our descendants.

"Destroy it and you destroyed us. We stand by the famous wisdom saying: "Prevention is better than cure" and therefore we call on all parties including SOPAC to stop Nautilus from sea bed mining in our oceans."

As well as facilitating the voices of growing local community concerns about the lack of consultation by corporations, national governments and bodies like SOPAC, the NGO's are also calling for the precautionary principle to be adhered to.

Dr. Helen Rosenbaum, campaign coordinator for the Deep Sea Mining campaign in Australia and author of *Out of Our Depth: Mining the Ocean Floor in Papua New Guinea* said, "The precautionary principle is notably absent in some of the policy documents we are seeing. We are concerned that SOPAC is not truly independent enough to be guided by the principle even though scientists and regulators have called for this to be the underlying principle behind any discussion and framing of regulation and legislation."

"The precautionary principle states that if a development has a risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on the developers. In the case of the Solwara 1 project case it would be Nautilus and the PNG government."

Catherine Coumans of MiningWatch Canada, editor of the *Out of our Depth* report said, “It is clear that Nautilus cannot meet the precautionary principle. The company has admitted, for example, not being able to conduct basic toxicity testing on the deep sea species that will be directly and indirectly affected.”

John Chitoo, Bismarck Ramu Group said, “Even if good laws are in place for deep sea mining in the Pacific do we even have the human resources or the capacity in managing it. Without enforcement we end up with indigenous communities suffering like they have in PNG at the hands of the worlds largest mining companies like BHP Billiton (Ok Tedi and the destruction of the Fly River) and Rio Tinto (Panguna and the war in Bougainville).

“If this supposed new “frontier” is to start – the entrenchment of deep sea mining in the Pacific, an unsustainable industry – we would be certainly sealing the fate of local communities in the Pacific, and humanity as a whole, for the worst.”

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You can download the *Out of Our Depth: Mining the Ocean Floor in Papua New Guinea* report here:

<http://www.deepseaminingoutofourdepth.org>