



World Ocean Day 2024 – Let's Defend The Deep

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

We are writing an open letter to you on behalf of the [Deep Sea Conservation Coalition](https://www.deep-sea-conservation.org/), a global alliance of over 120 civil society organizations working to safeguard the planet's least explored and largest biome - the deep sea. The Coalition's focus on the preservation of the deep ocean is especially relevant as we 'Awaken New Depths' and celebrate World Ocean Day this year.

A healthy deep sea is critical for all life on Earth. The deep sea supports a rich abundance of life, with biodiversity akin to tropical rainforests. Scientists believe that as many as [10 million species](#) may inhabit the deep, the majority of which are [yet to be discovered](#).

A healthy deep ocean is also one of our greatest allies in the fight against climate change. The ocean helps regulate Earth's climate and has absorbed and stored over 90% of the excess heat and 28% of the CO₂ generated by humanity's burning of fossil fuels. Further biodiversity loss and disturbance of the deep seabed could severely limit the deep sea's ability to sequester and store carbon.

Your Excellency, in your remarks on World Wildlife Day this year, you stated "We depend on nature. Let's show that nature can depend on us – and act now to protect it". By protecting the deep sea, we simultaneously preserve nature and take bold climate action.

However, cumulative threats to the deep sea such as deep-sea mining and bottom impact fishing, magnified by pervasive impacts of climate change and pollution, make its protection of paramount importance. We must take action now.

Bottom impact fishing, in particular, bottom trawling, poses a number of threats to the health of the deep sea, including [physical damage](#) to fragile, long-lived habitats and species; reduction in biodiversity and abundance; high levels of bycatch, including of endemic and endangered species; and seabed disturbance and erosion, which results in [degradation of carbon-rich sediments](#). Despite multiple UN General Assembly commitments to protect deep-sea biodiversity from destructive fishing practices made [over the past 20 years](#), there are still bottom fishing vessels active on seamounts and other vulnerable marine ecosystems across the world's ocean. In 2021, the [UN's Second World Ocean Assessment](#) concluded that still today, "fishing, especially bottom trawling, constitutes the greatest current threat to seamount ecosystems."

Similarly, scientists warn that the possible launch of deep-sea mining risks [serious large-scale damage to biodiversity](#) that would be irreversible on human timescales. Deep-sea mining threatens the extinction of species; disturbance of Earth's largest carbon sink; destruction of

ecosystems and habitats; and pollution through underwater sediment plumes, wastewater disposal, and non-stop, industrial-scale noise and light. Contrary to the false claims of the industry, [deep-sea mining is incompatible with a just green transition](#) and would provide [limited financial benefits](#) beyond mining companies themselves. [Governments](#), parliamentarians, and millions of people worldwide, including [scientists](#), [businesses](#), [financial institutions](#), [Indigenous People](#), and [human rights organizations](#) are urgently calling for a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining.

Destructive activities in the deep result in cumulative impacts on already stressed and fragile open ocean and deep-sea ecosystems. This, in turn, has both direct consequences for the millions of people who depend on a healthy, thriving ocean for their food and livelihoods; and indirectly for all current and future generations, given the integral role of a healthy ocean for a healthy planet.

Your Excellency, in the spirit of World Ocean Day 2024, we urge you to highlight that the protection of the deep sea is a necessary and effective measure toward ending the ocean and planetary emergency. To secure the deep sea's health for future generations, we seek your support to call for States to:

- Enact a precautionary **moratorium or pause on deep-sea mining** to allow for sufficient science and understanding of the deep ocean and the impacts of deep-sea mining on the marine environment.
- Protect vulnerable marine ecosystems by **withdrawing their vessels from bottom impact fishing on seamounts**. By protecting seamounts and other vulnerable marine ecosystems, we protect the whole ocean.

Signed,





EcoNexus





Partner Organisations:



