

# Environmental, PRAMUN 2026 Synopsis

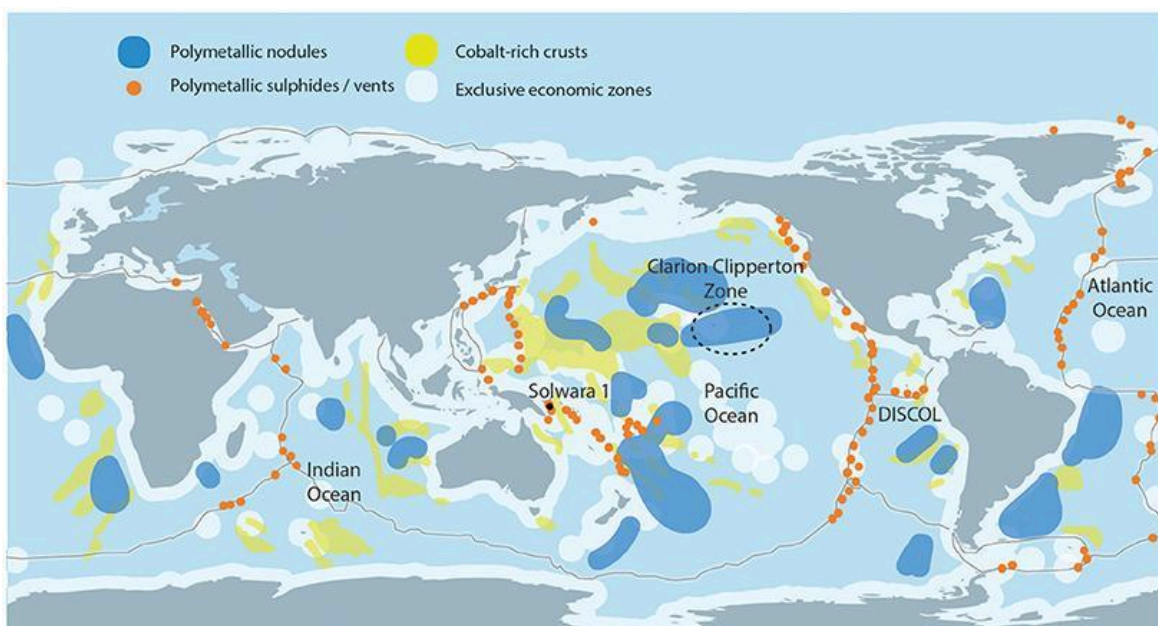
## Topic #2: Regulating deep-sea mining in international waters

### I. Background information

With rising digitalization, infrastructure and overall development of technologies, the demand for resources also increases. That leads to mining expansion, besides the terrestrial one, also deep – sea mining. While we know the terrain and, for the most part, the natural inhabitants and climate risks of mining on land, dangers of mining in the ocean exist, but are still not fully explored. However, we already know that the deep – sea area is the most inhabited and diverse environment on the whole Planet Earth. Mining of a huge amount, several times bigger than on land, of natural resources that can be found there, could endanger those species. The list of resources includes copper, nickel, gold, silver, cobalt, lithium, rare earth elements and other various minerals important for development, as was mentioned in the introduction.

The particular interest is for polymetallic nodules. These would be removed from the seabed by a suction device, altogether with top layers of sediment and later on, when desired materials are filtered out, the rest would be pumped back. Other resources include polymetallic sulfides (sulfur and various metals) and metal-rich crusts on seamounts.

Some countries (such as Japan, Cook Islands and for some time also Norway) already started a deep-sea mining process in their own waters, so-called *exclusive economic zones* - EEZs. However, the largest deposits lie in the international waters, which do not belong to any country in particular, and regulation of those is in question. Areas discussed include the Red Sea (polymetallic sulfides), Indian Ocean (combination) or project Solwara 1, which operates in the area of Papua New Guinea. The most desirable one is Clarion – Clipperton Zone, an enormous abyssal plain between Mexico and Hawaii, in the North Pacific Ocean. In this deposit scientists found trillions of polymetallic nodules.



Depths of oceans are the most inhabited areas on Planet Earth. Scientists explored tens of thousands of different species, but it is estimated, there are millions yet undiscovered. These species are used to darkness, calmness and quiet and it is questionable whether deep-sea mining would keep the environment that way. The lack of these conditions could disturb the reproduction and everyday life of deep-sea species and could possibly lead to extinction. Another danger lies in the machines themselves – the mechanism heating up the ocean, destroying the habitat and killing the species directly by stepping on them or suffocating them by unusually swirling sediments. And although one of the reasons for deep – sea mining is to protect the terrestrial life, building a functioning production would need kilometers long area, possibly on shores. This could damage the local environment including marine life close to the coasts and by that fishing and other related businesses.

## II. United Nations Involvement

The United Nations operates in this matter via ISA – The International Seabed Authority, which was founded under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and 1994 Agreement on Implementation. It has operated as an autonomous international organization since June 1996.

ISA has been negotiating for a general „rulebook“ for years (a last conference took place in July 2025), but still has not come to a consensus and will continue its negotiations in 2026. However, there has been a major influence made by Canadian *The Metals Company*. The business announced that they will cooperate with the USA (which is not part of ISA) and together will launch the first deep – sea mine in the Pacific Ocean. The specialists worry about the result of underregulated mining, so it might lead to faster negotiations.

## III. Questions to consider

- Does my country already mine in its EEZ?
- Does my country take part in any research?
- Does my country consider taking part in deep – sea mining ?
- Would my country be affected by deep-sea mining?

## IV. Sources and useful links

*World resources institute* - What We Know About Deep-Sea Mining — and What We Don't

<https://www.wri.org/insights/deep-sea-mining-explained>

*UN* - The International Seabed Authority and Deep Seabed Mining

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/international-seabed-authority-and-deep-seabed-mining>

*Deep Sea Mining* - 11 Countries developing Subsea Minerals in their EEZs

<https://deepseamining.ac/article/50#gsc.tab=0>

*NPR* - The world has no rulebook for deep-sea mining. One company is pushing forward anyway

<https://www.npr.org/2025/03/27/nx-s1-5336319/international-deep-sea-mining-critical-metals-seabed#:~:text=Who%20decides%20if%20mining%20happens%3F>

*The PEW Charitable Trust* – The Clarion Clipperton Zone

[https://www.pew.org/~media/assets/2017/12/sea\\_the\\_clarion\\_clipperton\\_zone.pdf](https://www.pew.org/~media/assets/2017/12/sea_the_clarion_clipperton_zone.pdf)

*ISA* – About ISA

<https://isa.org.jm/about-isa/>

*IUCN* - The impact of deep-sea mining on biodiversity, climate and human cultures

<https://www.iucn.nl/en/story/the-impact-of-deep-sea-mining-on-biodiversity-climate-and-human-cultures/>