



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 12.1.2023
C(2023) 364 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the initiative ‘Setting the course for a sustainable blue planet - Joint Communication on the EU’s International Ocean Governance agenda –’ {JOIN(2022) 28 final}.

With its new agenda on the International Ocean Governance, the EU confirms its commitment to strengthen the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (‘Life Below Water’). This policy has an important role in delivering on the European Green Deal. Also, the new agenda was adopted ahead of the Conferences of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) and under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) to demonstrate the EU’s strong engagement for the ocean.

The Joint Communication builds on the 2016 Joint Communication, with the continued objective to strive for safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed oceans. It has four objectives:

- strengthening the international ocean governance framework at global, regional and bilateral levels;*
- making ocean sustainability a reality by 2030 by taking a coordinated and complementary approach to common challenges and cumulative impacts;*
- continuing to make the ocean a safe and secure space as competition in international waters and challenges to the rules-based multilateral order are growing;*
- building up international ocean knowledge for evidence-based decision-making to result in action to protect and sustainably manage the ocean.*

The Joint Communication identifies key priorities for the EU to deliver on these commitments. The Commission is pleased that the Bundesrat shares the view that

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protection and conservation of marine biodiversity should be key priorities of the EU's action, requiring intensive international cooperation at global level.

The Commission, together with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has put forward several actions to halt and reverse the biodiversity decline, protect the seabed and ensure sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

On deep seabed mining specifically, the Commission would like to reiterate what is indicated in the Joint Communication. There is a broad consensus in the scientific community and among state actors¹ that knowledge related to the deep-sea environment and the impacts of mining is not comprehensive enough to enable evidence-based decision-making to allow for proceeding safely with exploitation². The EU will continue to advocate for prohibiting deep-sea mining until scientific gaps are properly filled, so that it can be demonstrated that no harmful effects arise from mining, and, as required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the necessary provisions in the exploitation regulations for the effective protection of the marine environment are in place. The EU will continue to contribute to the negotiations of the exploitation regulations at the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to achieve a robust framework for marine environment protection, including standards and guidelines for threshold values and normative standards. The Commission hopes it can count on Germany's full support in this context. In parallel, the EU is supporting research to improve knowledge on deep sea ecosystems and on monitoring and supervising technologies.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours sincerely,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Virginijus Sinkevičius
Member of the Commission*

¹ <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/motion/069>

² [World Economic forum, Decision-Making on Deep-Sea Mineral Stewardship: A Supply Chain Perspective, WHITE PAPER, APRIL 2022; D. Amon et al., 2022. Assessment of scientific gaps related to the effective environmental management of deep-seabed mining, 138 *Marine Policy*; Miller et al., 2018. An Overview of Seabed Mining Including the Current State of Development, Environmental Impacts, and Knowledge Gaps.](#)