



Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

399 Hudson Terrace Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632
201-608-5401 Fax: 201-608-5407 www.csjp.org

June 16, 2022

Distinguished delegates,

As a faith-based NGO, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide written comment as part of the proceedings of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference on the topic of "Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation of Goal 14". As a distinguished Catholic order with a 138-year history, we take seriously our moral obligation to care for Creation and practice integral ecology, as Pope Francis has called on us to do through the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. We join the conference organizers in raising alarm about the crises that our oceans face in the immediate future.

We applaud the conference organizers and parties for drawing attention to the interlinkages between the oceans and the carbon cycle, as expressed through interactive dialogue 4 (reducing ocean warming) and interactive dialogue 8 (leveraging interlinkages between SDG14 and other SDGs). We also congratulate the selection of proceedings for highlighting the critical need to manage, protect, conserve, and restore ocean ecosystems.

As people of faith who believe in the sacredness of all life, we encourage delegates to exercise caution when confronted with anthropocentric language that frames the oceans as inert resources, or ones that exist purely for short-term gain by the few at the expense of the many. We believe that all conference proceedings and documents need to reflect worldviews grounded in interconnectedness, interdependence and relationship. Without such perspectives, the proceedings will fail to speak to the sacred wisdom and experiences of many people whose voices might otherwise be obscured, including indigenous peoples, spiritual communities, and faith groups.

In order to fully realize the potential of this conference, we encourage all delegates to use this opportunity to address a pressing issue that poses a significant threat to ocean well-being: deep seabed mining (DSM). This harmful practice has not yet begun to be implemented in international waters and requires prior International Seabed Authority (ISA) approval. However, there are alarming gaps in our knowledge about DSM's impacts that potentially pose a significant risk of causing severe harm to marine biodiversity, coastal communities, and the entire planet through the disruption of the carbon cycle. DSM would likely lead to increased ocean pollution as it disturbs the sea floor, causing habitat loss, seafloor compaction, and substrate loss. This harmful practice could threaten the livelihoods of coastal communities, and it would stymie the future of marine scientific discoveries. **Most alarmingly, DSM threatens to disrupt the global carbon cycle, accelerating climate change at the worst possible moment in history.** The oceans are in urgent need of safeguarding as our most valuable carbon sink, and the time to protect them is now.

DSM threatens to undo much of the good that could emerge from this historic conference unless delegates take a strong stance against it. **We call on parties to endorse a global moratorium on deep seabed mining.** There is too much at stake to allow this practice to begin until its potential impacts and risks are fully understood, and all alternatives that would protect human and marine well-being have been explored. Through technological innovation and incentivizing the recycling of minerals, we can meet our future mineral and energy needs while building a circular economy that forefronts the land-sea linkages needed for a future that is as blue as it is green.

In conclusion, we urge parties to use this historic opportunity to take a stand before it is too late. Nothing can replace a healthy ocean. The time is upon us to take this major and easily enacted step to protect marine and coastal life. The oceans are sacred—they are the source of life—and it is vital that the actions we take are aligned with this awareness.

Sincerely,

Blair Nelsen
UN-NGO Representative
Executive Director, Waterspirit ministry