

**Deep sea mining – an emerging and challenging activity**  
**Keynote speech by Director General Lowri Evans at the European**  
**Parliament Conference on "Deep-Sea Mining – What next for science?"**  
**Brussels, 17th November 2016**

### ***Introduction***

Sustainable access to mineral raw materials is crucial for the EU economy.

Raw materials are key inputs into products we are keen to buy. Our phones today, electric cars tomorrow.

Ensuring a sustainable and secure supply from primary and secondary sources along with resource efficiency is a priority. Resource efficiency alone will not be enough.

Deep-sea minerals are one of the potential sources for primary supply in the future, and this is why we are investing in developing knowledge and research in this area.

The world is getting closer to the exploitation of deep-sea mineral deposits.

Before we get into exploitation we still have many challenges to face: environmental, regulatory and technological.

We need time to reflect together – in Europe and globally – on how to address those challenges.

### ***State of play***

Mineral resources in the deep-sea are a potential source of strategic metals like copper, zinc, gold, cobalt, rare earth elements and manganese.

Increasing demand, in combination with a scarcity of some raw materials, is what's driving attention for deep-sea resources.

The Commission is fully aware of this potential:

- The Raw Materials Initiative considers deep-sea deposits a potential source of supply.
- In the Blue Growth Communication, marine mineral resources were identified as one of the five focus areas.

We have seen now several decades of research and technological developments.

And our companies are well positioned to provide high-quality products and services at a global scale.

We know that there are environmental risks and challenges surrounding deep sea mining.

Managing and mitigating the environmental impacts is essential.

And that's why part of our investment in research has been allocated to projects looking at that.

We also need a robust regulatory framework in place because commercial exploitation projects will start.

A decision to mine in the deep sea should always be based on a cost/benefit analysis, weighing the economic, social and environmental aspects.

This should be true in the EU and also globally.

In this respect, international ocean governance assumes particular relevance.

That's why we adopted a Joint Communication on international oceans governance a few days ago, proposing actions for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans (JOIN(2016) 49 final).

The EU has set out an agenda for better global ocean governance based on a cross-sectoral, rules-based international approach.

As we all know Russia, Korea, China, Japan, India, Brazil and some EU Member States are positioned as global players.

There are already permits for exploration. This exploration process is now commercially oriented.

For international waters, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) has issued Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for the deep-sea mineral deposits.

ISA is developing a legal framework for exploitation.

The Commission needs to work together with Member States to strengthen the co-operation with ISA.

This is a precondition if we want to implement a robust and transparent legal framework.

Very recently the G7 also called on ISA for an effective and transparent code for sustainable deep-sea mining.

The same principles would need to be extended to EEZs and territorial waters.

The EU has some of the highest environmental and social standards and regulations for mining operations.

That is why our contribution to this process is crucial.

### ***EU support to research and innovation on deep sea mining***

We also need to pursue our efforts on research and innovation.

Our research and innovation efforts in the deep-sea domain cover, notably, minerals, ecosystems and technology.

We still have a lot to discover and to understand, to be better prepared to face future challenges.

That is why it is important to keep supporting research in the deep-sea.

The EU financial effort to fund deep-sea mining related research in the last two framework programmes - FP7 and Horizon 2020 - accounted around 47 million euros, so far.

In the FP7 projects, both environmental impacts and technology development were targeted.

The Horizon 2020 projects are mainly dedicated to technology development, designed to have a minimum environmental impact.

The close co-operation between the environmental driven and technological driven research projects is crucial.

We need to pursue this marine research post 2020.

## ***EIP Raw Materials Commitments***

Deep-sea mining is relevant also in the context of the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials (EIP).

The EIP is an EU platform that brings together the EU industry, institutional stakeholders, academia, research organisations and NGOs, to promote innovation along the entire value chain of raw materials.

Its Strategic Implementation Plan identifies actions for deep-sea mining in three priority areas: technology, framework conditions and international co-operation.

## ***Conclusion***

Ladies and gentlemen,

The EU industry holds a leading position that can be a driving factor to place the EU as the main global player on technology supply for deep-sea mining.

We are well positioned to influence the design of a robust global legal framework and to ensure a proper mitigation and management of the environmental impacts.

We hope for the European Parliament's endorsement of the EU agenda for international ocean governance so we can take this forward.

Thank you.