

# **Deep Sea Mining Operations**

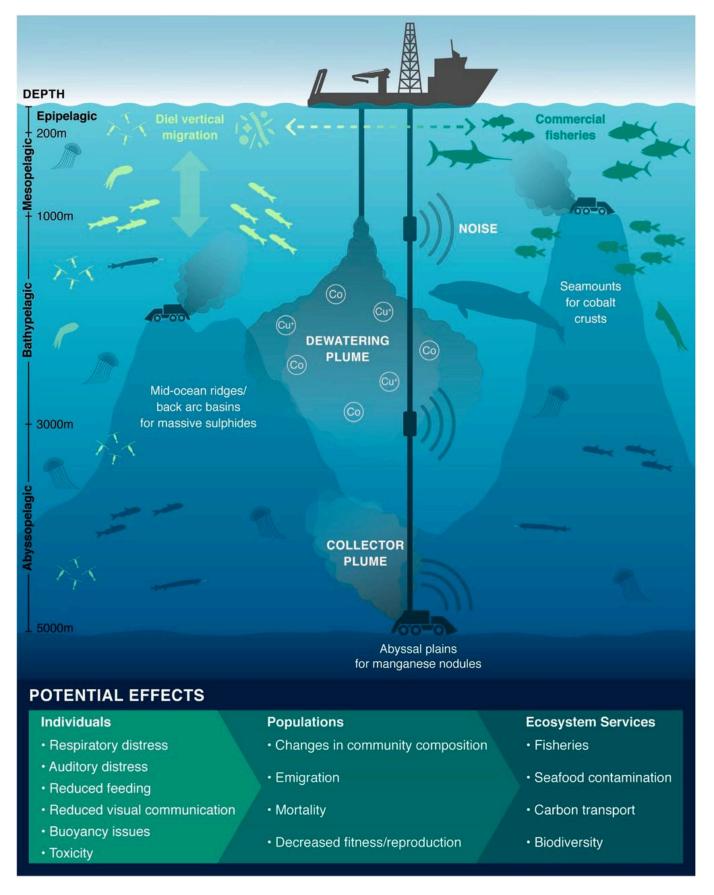
## Why in news?

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) has decided that it will start taking permit applications in July 2023 from companies that want to mine the ocean's floor.

## What is Deep sea mining?

The deep sea ocean floor covers <u>about two-thirds</u> of the total seafloor.

- Deep-sea mining is the *process of retrieving mineral deposits* from the deep seabed in the ocean *below 200m*.
- Deep-sea mining has metals crucial to making the transition to *clean energy*.
- Deep sea mining will be conducted to extract key battery materials such as cobalt, copper, nickel, and manganese from rocks called "*polymetallic nodules*".
- Research suggests that deep sea mining *could destroy habitats* and wipe out species.



#### What is the issue?

- **Moratorium** Several nationals called for a moratorium on industrial mining at the ISA's council meeting.
- Destroy deep-sea habitats -The digging and gauging of the ocean floor by machines

can alter or destroy deep-sea habitats.

- **Fine sediments** -Deep-sea mining will stir up fine sediments on the seafloor, creating plumes of suspended particles.
- **Biodiversity** Whales, tuna and sharks could be affected by noise, vibrations and light pollution caused by deep sea mining.
- **Mining code** In the absence of a mining code, the ISA's Governing council is uncertain about the process it should adopt for reviewing applications for mining contracts.

# **Quick Facts**

## **International Seabed Authority**

- **Establishment** An autonomous international organization established in 1994 under
  - $\,\circ\,$  1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
  - 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1994 Agreement).
- Headquarters -Kingston, Jamaica
- **Members** -168 Members which includes 167 Member States and the European Union
- **Exclusive Economic Zones** -ISA holds authority over the ocean floors outside of its 168 member states' Exclusive Economic Zones
- **Protects marine environment** -ISA has the mandate to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed-related activities.
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ISA is the organization through which States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities in the area for the benefit of humankind.

# **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**

- Establishment -Adopted in 1982
- **Function** Lays down a *comprehensive law and order* in the world's oceans and seas establishing rules governing all uses of the oceans and their resources.
- Under UNCLOS, which *India ratified in 1995*, the sea and resources in the water and the seabed are classified into three zones:
  - Internal waters (IW) -It is on the landward side of the baseline which includes gulfs and small bays. Coastal states treat IW like land.
  - **Territorial sea (TS)** -It extends outwards to <u>12 nautical miles</u> from the baseline. The coastal nations enjoy sovereignty over air, sea, seabed and subsoil and all living and non-living resources therein.
  - $\circ$  **Exclusive economic zone (EEZ)** -This extends outwards to 200 nautical miles from the baseline.
- In EEZ, the coastal nations have sovereign rights for exploration, exploiting, conserving and managing all the natural resources therein.

- The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) -Serves as the secretariat of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty - An international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction within the framework of UNCLOS.

#### References

- 1. The Indian Express Deep Sea Mining
- 2. <u>IUCN | Deep Sea Mining Issues</u>
- 3. <u>ISA About ISA</u>
- 4. <u>UNCLOS</u> About UNCLOS

