

Overview of SMS Mining Interest in the Pacific

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There is commercial interest in mining seafloor massive sulphide deposits found at hydrothermal vent sites in the South Pacific Ocean. These sites lie within the national ocean jurisdiction of several small, developing Pacific Island countries. Each Government has the right to exploit (or protect) these resources. As developing countries, they share an interest to develop new streams of national revenue. Initially, Pacific Island countries responded positively to approaches from foreign mining companies. However, over time, responses to deep-sea mining have varied across the region, influenced in part by traditional and religious values, and NGO activism. This presentation will provide an overview of the status of SMS mining interest in the Pacific Islands region, and how local views about ocean environments and existing uses, such as fisheries, might influence Government policy in the region, and the importance of early and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

The presentation will discuss the following Pacific Island countries: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.