

**Press review:  
Mining in the South Pacific**

**Vol. 15, No. 4, July – August 2023, 76 pages**

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**Abbreviations in common use:**

BCL: Bougainville Copper Limited

LNG: Liquid Natural Gas

PIR: Pacific Islands Report

PNG: Papua New Guinea

**Websites:**

Radio New Zealand: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news>

PNG Post-Courier: <https://postcourier.com.pg/>

PNG National: <https://www.thenational.com.pg/>

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**Conflict could have been avoided, says politician**

*Official records state that the Panguna Mine in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville started in 1972. Former activist turned politician THEONILA ROKA MATBOB in an interview with Lae Bureau Chief GLORIA BAUAI, says for the landowners, it started in 1958. Matbob, the member for Ioro Constituency in the Bougainville House of Representatives and the minister for community government, speaks here on the absence of a landowner voice which led to the national crisis, and years after, how the people of Bougainville are still struggling for their voice to be heard amid the devastating social and environmental impacts.*

National, 31 August 2023

**Q: The basis of your speech was on the fact that instead of all parties sitting at a round table, the issue was militarised. Could you stress on that?**

**MATBOB:** Right from the start, literature proved that there would be conflict if the project was not handled well. In the 17 years of operation, locals, most from the impacted community area employed by the company began realising that they were left outside of the equation when it came to wealth harvest. They had no decision-making power so they wanted the Bougainville Copper

Agreement 1967 to be reviewed to allow for participation and proper regulation. There were movements, pressure groups formed, just to get the attention of the government to bring them to a roundtable, to give space for LOs to speak about their issues with the company and its operations largely. Bougainvilleans even went into looting dynamites just to get the government's attention but nothing worked.

Instead of a simple discussion to address the problem, security forces were deployed into Bougainville, blockages were imposed with the idea that the locals will run out of basic services to allow the mine to continue. However, seeing the resistance, war was declared — a poor decision which resulted in 25,000 people dying on both the PNG and Bougainville sides and thousands of properties lost. After signing the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001, both the PNG and Bougainville governments, pushed aside the real agenda which was the catalyst for the war and focused on Bougainville's independence. Now, the PNG government says that we have to be economised to be independent. We need the mine to do that; but although there are laws now surrounding ownership, the mine still does not belong to us unless there is proper closure.

Again, the agenda for proper closure has been overlooked by the PNG government. So we looked overseas and found that in the justice system of Australia, there is an office that deals with all their corporate companies operating off-shore. Human Rights Law Centre of Australia fearfully came on board because no one takes a mining company to a legal table for real discussions after 30 years; you can only do so within six years after closure. By 2019, we were able to table the legal complaint (supported by 155 signatures) which our lawyers pursued and got Rio Tinto to come to a roundtable. Mid-2020 Rio Tinto announced they would fund an independent assessment on the physical, environmental, social and human rights destructions on Bougainville.

We formed a strict strong governance system around it; a decision-making body called the oversight and beneath it a sub-technical committee made up of the best scientists in the world, headed by a Bougainvillean scientist. The first phase which is the assessment has been completed and we're now into the second phase which is the clean-up and mitigation of the project. Immediately next month, we will start off the third campaign on assessing all the other areas of social impact and analysing data and by mid-June 2024, the final report will come back to me as the lead complainant. I will present it to the Autonomous Bougainville Government. With this evidence, we will then call on the PNG government to sit down and talk. Sadly, PNG government has not had any representation in the governance although we have asked through the Bougainville parliamentarians.

**Had we talked about local content back then, conflict of Panguna could have been avoided.**

**Q: How serious are the environmental and social impacts?**

**MATBOB:** Environmental issues are an everyday agenda — it is like the mining never stopped in Bougainville and to date, continues affecting 12,000 to 14,000 persons. The cone area which is the SML area is more chemical-related. Life expectancy is zero to 50 and you will rarely find an elderly man or woman there. The area that I come from — Enamira — is the tailings area, we have landslips and landslides every day. Landlessness is real. We live in the valley but all the flatland area was taken up by the tailings, so we had to literally re-build our homes on the sand and find ways to rehabilitate.

The mid-tailings area — you have landfills that collapse in tonnes. The mine created about a billion tonnes of waste which we are dealing with. So normally, the collapsing landfills from one area goes down and covers the farmland areas, the arable land area and keeps extending the coastline. We have shortage of food, hunger is common. The only way out is getting educated and getting job, but it is disturbing to see the high rate of illiteracy. Although we come from a resource-rich area, we are not at the level where we can participate in the event Panguna Mine resumes. With desperation, people are resorting to alluvial mining as the only source of revenue.

**Q: Were you directly impacted?**

**MATBOB:** I was born into it during the escalation of the conflict. My mother was on the run when she gave birth to me and we lived in the mountains. My father, from West New Britain and being a non-Bougainvillean at that time, was not safe, left. He later returned to us but he got killed during this crisis. What made things even more complicated was the fact that my family was directly involved with the leadership at that time through my grandfather — so we were like targets from both sides. But we managed to live through it. My mother single-handedly raised us — two boys and three girls — sending us to university.

**Q: What do you think of CANCONEX and the discussions on local content?**

**MATBOB:** It is about time that local content is just an agenda for discussions but made a reality. Prospects in the country that haven't started have that advantage. Had we talked about local content back then, conflict of Panguna could have been avoided. When we talk about local content, it must be clearly defined; what does it look like in real picture? I believe in downstream processing as the basis to prosperity in our societies. You can talk about creating employment in mines, reality in PNG is that not everyone works. Let's stop blaming lawlessness and get everyone busy through downstream processing.

From the perspective of the LOs, this (Canconex) is the best kind of arrangement — where we the landowners, developers and policy makers, can be in one room and be able to listen to each other because it takes everyone to make the extractive industry development agenda happen. The Bougainville government sponsored our landowners from Panguna to be here to give them exposure, put them in a room where can they listen to real conversations that happen at the national level. For a lot of them, it is their first time and it is an amazing and humbling experience for me as their local MP to see them participating and observing all interactions happening.

**Q: What will be your advice to all project landowners?**

**MATBOB:** Biggest thing learning from Bougainville experience would be for all the resource owners in the country — landowners associations to stop isolating themselves and start working together. Currently, we have Porgera people on their own, Bougainville on their own, but trust me, there are many more areas in the country that the Government will start developing interest in. We need to start working together, learning from each other, even outside of such platform like Canconex so that in a way we can educate each other to have real and maximum benefit from the development agenda where extractive industry is concerned. To the people in general — start voting a leadership that could represent you because at the end of the day, your voice will only be amplified through the leader you appoint.

**Wenge wants mine deal terms renewed**

National, 31 August 2023

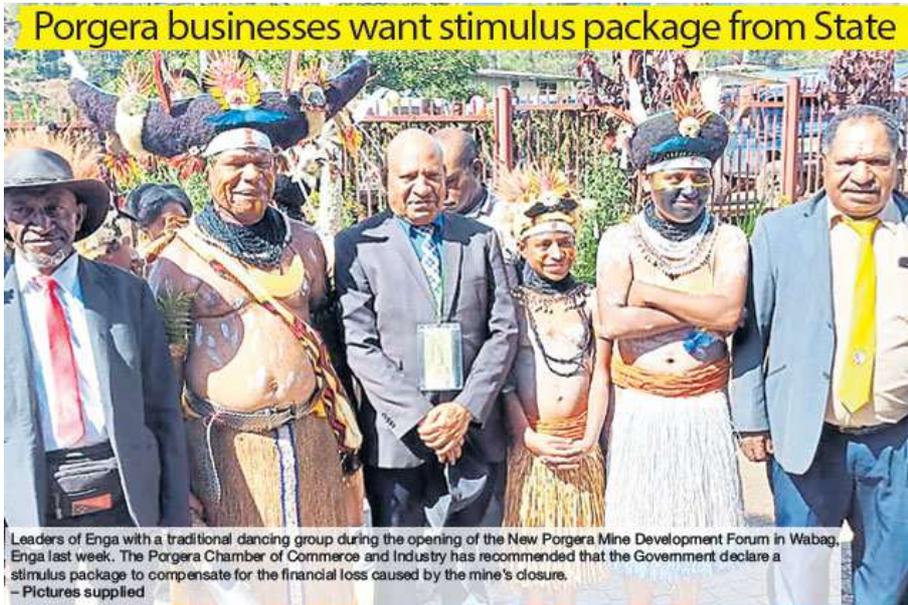
MOROBE Governor Luther Wenge says the terms of the Hidden Valley mine agreement signed in 2001 need to be renewed. “The agreement for the Hidden Valley mine was signed in 2001 when I was governor, and it came into operation in 2009 and in the terms of the agreement, among other things, it stated that the agreement was supposed to be renewed every three years,” he said. “The renewal required the Government, provincial government, landowners and the developers to get together and renew the terms of the agreement that was signed for the operation of the mine, and that unfortunately never eventuated.” Wenge said this in Parliament earlier this month.

He added that, “As required by the agreement, after every three years that agreement should be renewed. “From 2009 until now, almost 12 years have expired and the terms of the agreement was

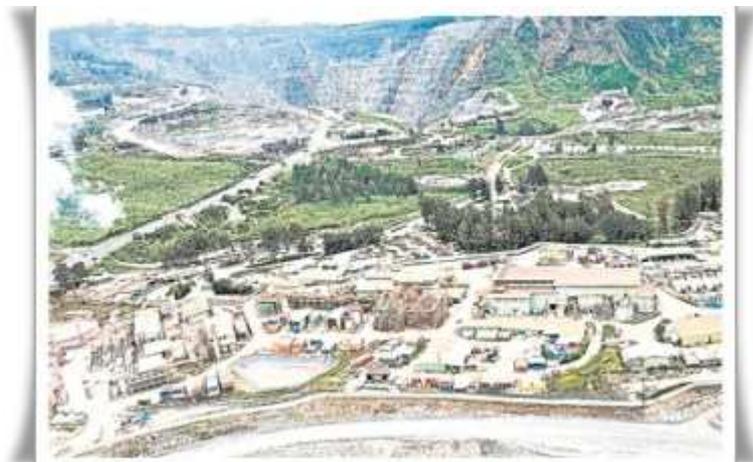
supposed to be renewed but that has never been undertaken. “I think that is the worst because the agreement that was signed by the parties to be renewed after every three years never took place. “In the terms of the agreement, there should be certain benefits that should be derived from the existence of that agreement and that has not happened.”

## Call for Porgera compo

By PETER ESILA, National, 31 August 2023



THE Porgera Chamber of Commerce and Industry has recommended that the Government declare a stimulus package to compensate for the financial loss caused by the mine’s closure. Chamber president Nickson Pakea urged the Enga government to work with the Porgera Chamber of Commerce and Industry in distributing the K20 million business development grants due to the closure of the Porgera mine. Chamber president Nickson Pakea said this during the PNG Community Affairs and National Content Conference and Expo in Lae on Tuesday. Pakea said the Porgera economy went to zero when the mine was closed in 2019 after the State refused to renew Barrick’s mining licence. “In actual fact, the mine closed when everyone was sleeping. “During the night, the power went off and later we realised that the State had refused to renew the licence.



The Porgera mine in Enga. – Pictures supplied

“That free power that we used to have went off,” said Pakea, who is also a local landowner. “The banks also closed due to ongoing tribal fighting and zero customers. “Contractors laid off and mine-

related business closed doors, cash flow reduced by 95 per cent. “In terms of local cash, we lost about K120 million income in the last these years. “About K2 billion worth of tax revenues from Porgera was lost. “My strongest recommendation is for the State to declare stimulus packages to compensate for the financial loss due to the mine’s closure. “Put money in the National Development Bank as a special guarantor for Porgera SMEs (small to medium enterprises) to access funds when the mine resumes operation.

“The fact is the short-term pain is becoming a long-term pain.” He added that law and order was out of control. “Right after the power went off, everything went off. “The law and order issues we have in Porgera, Enga or even in Highlands are caused by land, women and pigs fuelled by drugs and alcohol. “Drugs and alcohol and smuggling illegal items like firearms. “It is worse now, we are going through that in the project areas. “We need to have proper planning and identifying proper landowners and control of the influx of people into project areas.” Pakea said partnerships with all stakeholders would bring confidence back to Porgera.

### **Governor assures Wafi-Golpu project landowners of equity**

By ZEBEDEE GIAME, National, 30 August 2023

MOROBER Governor Luther Wenge says his government will ensure the Wafi-Golpu mining project landowners get their six per cent. Speaking at Bavaga village, Wenge said five per cent of the equity would come from the 10 per cent that the Government has given as free carry to the Morobe government. “That will be five per cent on top of the additional one per cent that was given on top of the legal two per cent mark for royalty payment,” Wenge explained. Wenge also announced that the Government had committed to and had made available K2.2 billion that will be paid in droplets of K150 million each year for the next 10 years. The K150 million will be paid at K50 million for basic services and infrastructure improvement and support grants, another K50 million to made available as seed capital by ways of repayable loans and the last K50 million will be paid to the respective landowner associations to be used at the discretion,” he said.

Wenge explained that these monies would be paid to the landowners when the Morobe government was satisfied with the level of proof. “We need to see court documents and other legal paper works to prove that you and your group the legal and traditional custodians of the areas that the Special mining lease 10 (SML10) would cover,” he said. Wenge said those landowner groups that were not in the SML10 vicinity should respect and work with those whose land was located within the SML10. “Those living along the pipeline corridor as well as those at the end of the pipeline will also benefiting but not rather as directly as those within the SML10 area,” he said. Wenge said that was why the Morobe government has been pushing to increase a “slice of the cake”, so that there was enough to go around.

### **PNG is centre of resource boom, says MRDC**

National, 29 August 2023

PAPUA New Guinea continues to be a centre for energy exploration in the world and landowners must be prepared to participate in business opportunities, according to the Mineral Resources Development Company (MRDC). MRDC managing director Augustine Mano said during the PNG Community Affairs and National Content Conference and Expo (Canconex) in Lae yesterday that business collaboration would go a long way. “The next 10 years will be for oil and gas including mining,” he said. Wafi-Golpu, P’nyang, Papua, Pasca, if you put all those projects together. It is almost US\$30 billion (about K109.8 billion).”

“The reason MRDC have grown their assets over the last 15 years to almost K7 billion is because of the collaboration of all subsidiaries, and putting in credible management systems. “Besides Africa, we are a centre of exploration. “I am saying this as a member of the state negotiating team involved in P’nyang, Papua LNG, PNG LNG (negotiations) and I know what I am talking about. “Are we ready to take the next wave? “Do we have the capacity? “Are we meeting the skill requirement? “How can we harness all these opportunities over the next 10 years? “This is the time where there’s increased exploration, both off shore and on shore, and the call is for Government to provide the right fiscal incentives and a stable regulatory framework.”

### **Moratorium placed on deep sea mining**

National, 29 August 2023

Prime Minister James Marape says a moratorium has been placed on the Nautilus deep sea mining and will continue until scientific evidence proves otherwise. Marape said the Melanesian Spearhead Group made a resolution to ban deep sea mining until technology and studies showed that it could be done in an environmentally-sensitive manner. “PNG waters have the most fertile ground for tuna so we’re also mindful of that,” he said. “Nautilus Mining has every right to continue doing business in the country in other areas apart from deep sea mining.” Marape said the Government had invested K3 million already to find out more about the project.

“If environmentally okay based on scientific evidence on a case by case basis, it could be processed. Mineral Resources Development acting managing director Jerry Garry said the mining sector must meet global expectations of environment and social governance (ESG). Garry said the Mining Act 1992 had limitations, and failed to adequately address certain aspects of the mining business, more so, the inclusion of the ESG. He said every major company globally was gearing to promote ESG more than ever. “From a global perspective, it has become critical and demanding that all companies that seek investment in the extractive industry must show strong commitment to the ESG.”

### **Projects to cease in decade: MD**

National, 29 August 2023

Mineral Resources Authority acting managing director Jerry Garry says most of the country’s big projects may cease within the next decade. While the country looks forward to new major investments, Garry warned that it must also prepare for existing mining projects closing prematurely. “If there is no investment put into explorations around OK Tedi to increase its reserves, it will be closing in the next decade,” he said. “Simberi has one year of oxide reserves. “If they don’t have the finance to convert the oxide plant into sulfur through flotation process, they may shut down.

“Hidden Valley has less than five years to go. “Porgera technically has 10 to 15 years of reserves. “And we believe there are more resources to convert into reserves. “Lihir has reserves to take us beyond 2060. “But again, it’s a very complex ore body which is hot. “They need to cool down the rocks before they test it. “It has its own challenges and we cannot take for granted as it may prematurely end.” Garry said Wafi-Golpu and Frieda River projects put together would increase the country’s copper production to between 200,000 and 600,000 tonnes annually.

## Local input crucial: PM

National, 29 August 2023

Prime Minister  
James Marape



PRIME Minister James Marape yesterday again stressed the importance of the involvement of local people in all phases of resource project development in the country. “As we stand at the threshold of an exhilarating major resource boom spanning from 2024 to 2038, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that our local communities are active participants in this transformative journey,” he told the Papua New Guinea Community Affairs and National Content Expo in Lae yesterday. “Local involvement is not confined to specific project phases,” Marape explained. “It is a continuous cycle spanning exploration, construction and operation. “This conversation of local content resonates with the essence of our nation’s progress.” The expo, held at the University of Technology in Lae and attended by more than 800 persons from around the country, was organised by the PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum.

Recalling the evolution since the Bougainville mine era, Marape underlined the transformation in people’s education levels and expectations from resource projects in their locales. “Expectations have evolved, citizens are more informed, and possess a profound understanding of their rights,” he said. “When we facilitate true local participation, it cultivates contentment within our communities, augments our national development, and fosters an environment conducive to investors’ success,” Marape added. He said failing to achieve this harmony “will necessitate intervention and enforcement by authorities five to 10 years from now as a consequence”. “Our aspiration is to witness resource-rich communities thriving autonomously within a decade, steering thriving businesses,” Marape said.

## 20,000 job opportunities missed

National, 28 August 2023

PAPUA New Guinea missed out on about 20,000 job opportunities from the PNG Liquefied Natural Gas project given to foreign mining companies, according to the Department of Commerce and Industry. Department secretary David Ganai said since 2017, the department only launched two policies — the small-to-medium enterprises (SME) and National Trade policies. But the country was missing a national content policy that guides the opportunities presented by investors and developers in the resource sector. He was addressing the final stakeholder validation for the country’s first national content draft policy in Port Moresby on Friday. The department plans to come up with

important economic policies that contribute toward the country's economic growth, through policies that guide how extractive and non-extractive resources are managed and the benefits they can provide for the country.

Through the areas of up-skilling national labour, increasing national employment in resource development projects, and providing business opportunities for Papua New Guineans, the Government plans to achieve the economic status of an upper middle income-earning country by 2030.

The national content policy development framework was launched this year, drafted by the Department of Commerce and Industry after consultations with stakeholders, mine developers, and business houses. The five identified resource sectors are mining, petroleum, fisheries, forestry and agriculture. The regulatory government agencies responsible for providing mandatory annual reports for these sectors highlighted are:

- MINING industry – Mineral Resource Authority;
- PETROLEUM industry – Department of Petroleum
- FISHERIES industry – National Fisheries Authority
- FORESTRY industry – PNG Forestry Authority, and;
- AGRICULTURE Industry – commodity boards.

### **Wafi-Golpu to benefit all LOs: official**

By ZEBEDEE GIAME, National, 28 August 2023

THE Wafi-Golpu project is expected to contribute significantly to Government revenue and therefore should start operation as planned, a local politician says. Morobe Tutumang mining minister and Watut local level government president Waka Daimon said the development forum was for the special mining lease (SML10) landowners only. Daimon described the project as a booster for Papua New Guinea's economy. "Not all landowners in and around the project and impact areas will be in this forum," he said. Daimon said all stakeholders needed to respect the Yangta, Hengambu and Babuaf landowner groups. "All other landowner groups from the surrounding and impact areas must work together with them as we head into the development of the mining project," he said. Daimon said this was because the three mentioned groups were owners of the land portions captured in the SML 10.

"We need to work together because I do not want anyone to miss out in the opportunities that will come with the project," he said. Daimon confirmed also that the Wafi-Golpu project had a life span of 140 years. "There will be reviews every 30 years to ensure that we are on the right track and so we all must seize the opportunity so that we can all benefit meaningfully, now and into the future," he said. Daimon assured all 11 parties and all other communities from around the SML10 area that the government would make sure they were all captured in the project's benefit sharing arrangements. "For the benefit of the other parties that are disputing, the Morobe government will be supporting you to ensure that all your issues are ironed out to avoid disputes popping up as the project progresses," he said. Morobe Governor Luther Wenge has clarified that the benefits of the resource owners would be distributed according to the court's establishment of the rightful resource owning groups. "The Government has awarded 10 per cent in equity to the Morobe government which we will give five per cent of our share to the resource owners and we will keep the remainder," he said.

## **Ipatas wants New Porgera Development Forum in Enga**

Post-Courier, 28 August 2023

Enga Governor Sir Peter Ipatas has asked the Government to continue the consultative process on reopening the New Porgera Mine in Enga Province and not elsewhere. He said the Porgera mine is in Enga and there is no point in taking any meeting concerning the mine out to another centre. Sir Peter made the statement following Mineral Resources Authority's (MRA) announcement in the media last week that further consultative meetings on the New Porgera Mine will start in Alotau, Mine Bay Province, starting August 29 tomorrow. This was after Prime Minister James Marape and Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala officially opened the New Porgera Mine Development Forum last week Tuesday in the Enga provincial capital of Wabag.

Mr Marape also publicly supported the idea during the occasion to continue the mine development forum in Enga. This was following Sir Peter's request to the Government not to choose another venue for the consultative talks. Initially, all the stakeholders were supposed to return early next week to resume the consultative process at the new Conference Centre of the Innovative University of Enga (IUE), Irelya Campus, Wabag, Enga Province. This is expected to take three weeks before the signing of a memorandum of understanding by all the stakeholders to pave the way for the reopening of the mine. "If Government authorities had taken the current tribal fight related lawlessness as a reason to take the meeting to Alotau, this must be corrected. There is no widespread lawlessness in the province.

"What we are experiencing currently are a series of tribal conflicts in a parts of Wapenamanda, Kandep and Porgera districts. They are confined to the certain tribes involved and their allies. "They do not concern the entire province or the general public including visitors," he said. Sir Peter said the province had recently successfully hosted the national senior education officers conference (SEOC) recently where 300 delegates from across the country attended without problem despite speculations on the tribal lawlessness. The province also recently hosted the 29th Enga Cultural Show and the opening of the Porgera Development forum with thousands attending from right across the country.

He said if the Government insists taking the meeting to another province, his Government will not attend because it is insensitive and irresponsible for our government to run away from our people and our domestic problems. Our people are in Enga despite our challenges and as their government and leaders, we need to face them and address their issues and challenges. "I am not speaking for the other stakeholders. They can attend wherever the consultative talks are being held. But my Government will not attend as we view this forum as a significant, once in a lifetime opportunity for my people and our government to negotiate the future of our people and province and it would be better done in our province. "The people of Enga have a province and there is no reason or justification to take the forum outside of our province and make decisions about our people and their future, outside of the province," Sir Peter said. The Enga Provincial Government has finalised its Position Paper following the presentation of the State's proposals last week and is looking to present it to the State team in Wabag this week.

## **PM praises Global Barrick**

BY MEROLYN TEN, Post-Courier, 25 August 2023

Prime Minister James Marape has praised the Global Barrick (Niugini) Limited to agree in paying off all the care and maintenance cost for the new Porgera Mine for the first time in history. "To date, I have known and worked with so many extraction companies who have come to extract our natural resources, I have never seen one agree to meet the care and maintenance costs of an

operation, but Global Barrick (Niugini) Limited is the first,” he said. Mr Marape said extraction companies have always wanted the care and maintenance costs to be partly paid by the government and landowners. “Despite the majority benefits of the new Porgera Mine that would be for Papua New Guinea with 51 percent and minority for the Barrick Niugini Limited with 49 percent, they still have agreed to pay the care and maintenance costs during the first ten years period and would continue.

“Unlike before where Papua New Guinea gets only five per cent and the previous extracting company of the old Porgera Mine gets 95 per cent yet off that five per cent, we still pay for the care and maintenance costs,” he said. Mr Marape commended the global Barrick under the leadership of CEO Mark Bristol, and told the landowners of the new Porgera Mine that they would not be cheated any more but get what was rightfully theirs. According to State Negotiation Team (SNT) Chairman Dairi Vele, the Landowners and the Enga Provincial Government would get a total of K7.8 billion royalty and equity in a period of 20 years from the New Porgera Mine excluding the negotiated compensation.

### **Wafi-Golpu royalties, equity agreed on: Governor**

National, 25 August 2023

MOROBE Governor Luther Wenge announced during an awareness recently that the equity and royalty sharing from the K18.5 billion Wafi-Golpu project had been discussed and agreed on. Wenge told the communities of the access roads leading to the mining project that the Government and project developer had agreed and given Morobe’s share of equity and royalty. He said the developer had agreed to give the province a three per cent royalty. “Under the Constitution, the engaging company has 98 per cent ownership of the minerals, while we have two per cent,” he explained. “Due to a long negotiation, we were awarded an extra one per cent, which adds the royalty up to three per cent.” Wenge said the three per cent would be shared respectively among the landowners, provincial government, churches and for the basic services as well.

“The first one per cent is to be shared amongst the declared landowners by the court, another one per cent is to be shared by the provincial government, while the remaining one per cent, of which half will be given to the churches and the other of it will be considered as a standby money for education, health and other government services.” Wenge added that the national government had given 10 per cent equity in the project to Morobe, of which, the five per cent would be given to landowners to be distributed among themselves, while the other percentage remained with the provincial government. He said the five per cent equity for the provincial government would be shared with the other districts of the province. “From the provincial government’s share of five per cent, one per cent would be removed from it and given to the churches so they can have about 1.5 per cent share,” he stated. “You (LOs) should do the same by giving your one per cent to the churches.”

### **LOs to benefit from Wafi-Golpu**

By JACINTA COHLEE, National, 25 August 2023

MOROBE Governor Luther Wenge says all impacted and affected communities of the Wafi-Golpu gold-copper project will benefit from the project. Wenge addressed communities living along the Wau-Bulolo Highway on Wednesday as part of a week-long awareness for the planned Wafi-Golpu project development. Locals asked Wenge and his provincial executive members how they would benefit from the mine and expressed their concern that as people living along the highway connecting Huon-Gulf, Bulolo and Special Mining Lease 10 location, they needed to benefit through infrastructural upgrades (roads and bridges) and small business opportunities.



Wenge said his administration would ensure that the developer and government met their commitments to developing Bulolo district including providing benefits for the people living along the highway. "I am here to listen to your voice," he said. "From the mountain to the valley and down to the Huon-Gulf coast line will benefit from the mine project. "We are not going to miss and leave anyone out from the royalty, equity and investment grants." Wenge clarified that benefits of the mining project would be given according to the court's declaration and establishment on who the rightful landowners were including incorporated landowner groups (ILGs) and the communities. He along with his delegation and Bulolo MP Sam Basil Jr started the mining development forum awareness on Monday and will complete the visit on the weekend by visiting the SML10 landowners (Babuaf, Yanta and Hengambu).

### **Marape's decision irks landowners**

BY REBECCA KUKU, National 25 August 2023

THE Porgera Landowners Association has called on Prime Minister James Marape to stop inviting people to come and sort out issues involving landowners who had given up their land for the mine. Association chairman Mark Ekepa said they were disappointed to see other stakeholders invited to attend the discussions when the landowners' issues were yet to be sorted out. Association members are boycotting the forum which began in Wabag this week. "We cannot attend this forum because it will only cause more conflict," Ekepa said. "We are the people directly affected by the mine. We gave up our land in the best interest of the nation. "And for 30 years, we still have not been relocated or compensated. "How can we attend the forum and discuss these issues, when Marape invited people from Hela, Western and Sepik to also attend? Does he want us to come and fight over the 2 per cent royalty?"

Ekepa said the landowners' issues must be sorted out first, and the draft compensation agreement given by the landowners with the plan for resettlement signed. "Sort us out then you can bring in the other stakeholders to discuss, because it is the law," he said. "You must compensate us before the mine can be opened." Ekepa said the landowners, like everyone else, wanted the mine to be re-opened soon. "(It has already been) 30 years. Now the new Porgera will be another 20 years," he said. "Start the resettlement programme, then we can discuss the compensation down the line. But resettle us first." The New Porgera development forum started in Wabag on Tuesday and will run for two weeks. Marape could not be reached for comment yesterday. But he said earlier that the process should involve all the stakeholders from Enga, Hela, Western and Sepik.

## Govt eager to resolve mine issues

National, 24 August 2023

PRIME Minister James Marape says the Government is committed to settling the Porgera mine's legacy issues, including the resettlement process. He said during the opening of the development forum in Wabag on Tuesday that when the mine reopened, "we will unbundle the K700 million for every year of the seven years". "I want the resettlement to happen good and proper. We will do a proper resettlement, proper government services, so that we can have major a transformation project in Porgera and Enga as we start to live and work in the new Porgera," he said. "As soon as the first smoke of the mine appears, we will unbundle the K700 million. We will structure the financing." Marape said the mine reopening was an important step towards economic recovery for Porgera, Enga and the country.

He also told Hela Governor Philip Undialu to relay the message to the Gas to Electricity (GTE) landowners from Hela who could not attend the development forum that their concerns had been noted. "We will have another mini forum in Tari. We will listen to them." The development forum is a prerequisite to the granting of a Special Mining Lease (SML) to the mine. Some landowners did not attend the development forum including the GTE group. Porgera SML principal landowner Nixon Mangape said yesterday: "I didn't attend the development forum. "We should have it here in Porgera. "But politicians moved it to Wabag. "We the SML and LMP (Lease for Mining Purposes) didn't attend also (because of) the law and order situation in Wapenamanda and Wabag."

## Forum, an important step towards mine reopening

*Stakeholders of the New Porgera Mine gathered in Wabag on Tuesday for the opening of the development forum, an important step towards the reopening of the mine. Below are excerpts of what Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala said when he opened the forum.*

National, 24 August 2023



Some of the landowner representatives of the Porgera Mine in Wabag during the development forum opening on Tuesday.

I am happy to be here today with our prime minister to share with you our achievements with the New Porgera Mine, under the Government's commitments and efforts for securing greater benefits from our resource developments across the country. The Government has negotiated benefits that will be shared on a 53:47 principle. PNG parties will receive 53 per cent of all benefits and Barrick 47 per cent over the life of mine. Today marks a historical moment when the Government can showcase its achievements under new Porgera mine, the commitments of securing greater, fair and

equitable benefits for this land, without upsetting the delicate balance of profitability for the mining companies. I am proud to open the consultation process of the development forum. Thereafter, the prime minister and the head of the State negotiating team will give you the benefit streams secured under the New Porgera Ltd. The greater benefits secured for the State and its stakeholders — the provincial government, local level government, landowners and the State) — could not be possible without many extraordinary men and women dedicated to the call by the Government, including the:

- NATIONAL Executive Council under the leadership of Prime Minister James Marape for his bold, firm and unwavering leadership;
- ENGA provincial and Porgera district administration for their undivided support;
- MARK Bristow, executives and management of Barrick (Niugini) Ltd for their understanding and cooperation;
- MINERAL Resources Enga, Enga government, landowners, project-impact communities, business communities, employees and the people of Enga for your patience and understanding in allowing the State to negotiate for a much longer period since its closure in early 2020;
- MINERAL Resources Authority and the Porgera project coordinator;
- MINING Advisory Council for assessments and advice; and,
- MEMBERS of the State Team.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS		
To State:	2021—2025	Life of Mine
Company Tax @ 32% (US\$ in million)	302	3,146
Duties & Levies (US\$ in million)	61	248
Dividends (US\$ in million)	Nil	568
	<b>363</b>	<b>3,962</b>
<b>To Landowners &amp; EPG:</b>		
Dividends (US\$ in million)	70	1,012
Compensation (US\$ in million)	15	15
Royalties (US\$ in million)	120	629
Sustainable Development Fund (US\$ in million)	15	30
	<b>220</b>	<b>1,686</b>
<b>Combined PNG Benefits (US\$ in million)</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>5,648</b>
<b>To Barrick:</b>		
Recommencement Fee (US\$ in million)	135	153
Dividend (US\$ in million)	177	4,855
<b>Total Barrick (US\$ in million)</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>5,008</b>

A table showing economic benefit split of Porgera mine. – Pictures supplied

### Consultation

I appeal to every stakeholder to embrace mutual respect, empathy, transparency, clarity, honesty and wisdom in all our discussions, so that everyone can be satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations on the benefit-sharing. This is not about a win-loss situation. In any discussion, one must be willing to give up something to win something.

## **Appeal**

I encourage everyone to respect each other, observe the rules of engagement and maintain mutual respect, empathy, transparency, clarity, honesty and wisdom in all our discussions, not only for the sake of winners-losers, or for the want of more benefits than others, but to ensure fair and equitable benefits for everyone affected by this mining project. The objective is providing a secure and stable environment for our communities, so that our children can grow without fear to reach their full potential, while we endeavour to improve the quality of lives, based on the better deals already secured under the new Porgera arrangements. Such improvements include relocation and resettlement and better infrastructure. Update on the re-opening of the Porgera Mine All the permitting and regulatory processes are carried out in a transparent manner and the decision turn-around times are executed swiftly. Following the negotiations between the State and BNL, a new company, New Porgera Ltd, was formed to manage the interest of the joint venture partners. Under the new agreement:

- BARRICK (Niugini) Ltd will remain the operator of the new Porgera gold mine;
- ALL the old existing licenses (Exploration Licence 454, Special Mining Lease 11 and supporting tenements were transferred to the New Porgera Ltd;
- THE board of the New Porgera Ltd resolve to surrender SML 11 and apply for a new SML. A new SML application was lodged with the MRA on June 6, 2023 for the Porgera mine. It is now coded SML 13.

The Mineral Resources Authority has completed many requirements of the permitting process under the laws. I thank you for your cooperation during the Security Forum and Wardens Hearings which were concluded successfully.

## **Activities**

Consultations: This process is a follow-up to my declaration at Paiam Station during the Security Forum. Mining Advisory Council and Special Mining Lease: Final stages of permitting. It is our desire to conclude all the permitting process by the end of August 2023. We can achieve this deadline only with your support so that the mine can re-open. Official declaration of the opening of the consultations for the Porgera Development Forum: I officially declare to be opened the consultation process under the Mining Development Forum for the SML13.

## **Direct beneficiaries**

Special Mining Lease landowners represented by elected 25 clan agents and its association, the Porgera Landowners Association (PLOA) chairman Tony Ekepa, deputy chairman and its executives. Mining Lease Landowners: Mining Easements Landowners (including the power pylon), Lease for Mining Purposes Landowners, Riverine Impact Communities (represented by the respective provincial administration), local level governments, Enga government.

## **Conclusion**

The Government's objective to ensure that greater benefits are received by the PNG stakeholders have been secured. We have achieved these objectives through negotiations and it is our desire to see tangible transformations such as the relocation and resettlement exercise under the New Porgera agreement. However, it all depends on every one. I urge all stakeholders to negotiate within the true spirit of respect, honesty and fairness to conclude the MoA process. The venue for the detail consultations will be in Alotau. The State Team through my ministry and the MRA will facilitate all logistical arrangements. We can build a better tomorrow only if we strive to embrace peace and respect for each other.

## Morobe creating week-long awareness on Wafi-Golpu

National, 24 August 2023



A MOROBE government delegation, led by Governor Luther Wenge, has started a week-long awareness programme on the planned Wafi-Golpu project development forum. The team, including the provincial executive members, visited the various Special Mining Lease 10 landowners. They started on Monday and expect to complete the awareness by Sunday. The objective is to discuss with the landowners and the impacted communities who will be representing them at the forum, and how the people expect to benefit from the mine project. No date has been confirmed for the development forum although the provincial government hopes to hold it towards the end of the year. A team from The National yesterday accompanied the delegation to visit Mare, Wampit, Gebensis, Timini and communities along the Lae, Wau-Bulolo Highway. Meanwhile, the Wafi-Golpu joint-venture head of external relations David Wissink said they were still in discussion with the State negotiating team to finalise the mining development contract.

## LOs want venue of forum changed

BY REBECCA KUKU, National, 24 August 2023

MEMBERS of a landowners association in Porgera want the venue of the development forum changed from where it is being held in Wabag for safety and security reasons. Chairman of the Porgera Landowners Association, Mark Ekepa, on behalf of the members, called on Prime Minister James Marape and Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala to change the venue to a location where free and fair negotiations can be held. The landowners are boycotting the forum which began in Wabag on Tuesday. “Change the venue of the development forum to a location in the country, where free and fair negotiations can be guaranteed without unwarranted threats or intimidation against negotiating parties,” Ekepa said. He stressed that the association members supported “100 per cent” the reopening of the Porgera mine.

“(But) what we don’t want is the strong-arm tactics employed by some of our leaders to manipulate outcomes of what should be free, fair, open and transparent negotiations at the development forum meetings,” he said. “We will not secure an enduring agreement under duress. “It will only lead to further conflicts later.” They questioned how the Government and its mining regulator, the Mineral Resources Authority, expected them to engage in free and fair negotiations in Wabag regarding their inter-generational benefits so dear to them, in a place facing intense fighting and violence. “I

cannot honestly say that these negotiations will come close to something that would resemble free and fair negotiations.

“So I have opted to stay out and boycott the so-called development forum in the Wabag fighting zone,” he said. Ekepa said the Government must intervene now to stop the violent killings in Enga and restore normalcy to Enga and Porgera before the mine could progress any further “The buyers of gold around the world must know that the gold produced in Porgera will not be stained by the blood of Engan women and children through unabated tribal conflicts and inhumane killings. “The value of life today appears to be less significant than the value of gold,” he said.

### **K5.3 million invested in Western accommodation project**

National, 23 August 2023

EIGHT community mine continuation agreement (CMCA) landowner groups and mine villages, women and children associations of the Ok Tedi mine have committed about K5.3 million in an accommodation project in Western. This was an opportunity provided by Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) for its Bige operations. The commitment was signified by a presentation of a cheque to OTML’s economic programme manager Steve Hoap at Cassowary Hotel last week in Kiunga. The event was attended by representatives of OTML, Ok Tedi Development Foundation (OTDF) and presidents of the nine associations. Speaking on behalf of the presidents, Saridu Saudi of the Suki-Fly Gogo Women and Childrens’ Association, thanked OTML for giving the women and children associations the opportunity to invest in Ok Tedi project.

Saudi also applauded OTDF for all its administrative and development support for the Women and Children programmes in the regions impacted by the mine and the province as a whole. “This is a major investment for us and as we seek partners to collaborate with us,” Saudi said. “I want to thank OTML management for this opportunity.” OTDF chief executive officer Havini Vira said that the team were pleased to witness the collective determination of the CMCA and Women’s Associations as they committed K5.3 million to the 150-man donga project. He said that the commitment reflected the women’s dedication to partner in growth, progress, and improved livelihoods for all. Vira added that the investment, with guaranteed returns, would generate profits that would support the women’s development activities beyond mine closure. The presentation event coincided with a scheduled meeting of the women presidents, which served as a reminder of the potential that could be unlocked when communities worked together towards a common goal.

### **Wafi-Golpu locals call for services**

National, 23 August 2023



A deteriorating road in Babuaf, Huon Gulf, Morobe. – Pictures supplied

ONE of the impacted communities of the Wafi-Golpu mining project are still calling for the construction of a road along with other basic government services to be brought into their village. Angelin Kikarem, a mother of one, representing all the women and children of Babuaf in Huon Gulf, Morobe, stated that people really needed an improved road. “The road condition is deteriorating, which makes it difficult for us to travel, limiting our access to other basic services,” she said. “We get on a PMV from Lae to 40-Mile, get on canoes to travel to the village, which is very risky.” Kikarem said many women died from cervical cancer and child birth while travelling by canoe to access hospital services along the highway or in Lae. “Our living conditions community should be looked at first because the country will benefit from our resources.” The Babuaf landowner association president, Jack Raban, said the people wanted to know how the government intends to prepare SML landowners and improve their basic infrastructure in the affected communities.



Babuaf Primary School constructed using bush materials. – Pictures supplied

“We want the K50 million allocated for the Landowners to bring services into the area before the mining project operates,” he said. “We want to know how much out of that K50 million is allocated for Babuaf and for which projects?” Morobe governor Luther Wenge responded, saying that the mining project has not started production, therefore royalties cannot be paid. “As for the K50 million, it is still with the provincial government until further notice,” he said.

### **Lihir: Miners held over theft**

National, 23 August 2023

TWELVE mine workers from Lihir gold mine have been arrested for allegedly working together to steal over 14kg of gold and selling it for K2.4 million over a period of time, a senior police officer says. Assistant police commissioner, New Guinea Islands, Perou N’dranou told *The National* that the 12 individuals were arrested last week after a raid by New Ireland police at the mine site. N’dranou said the raid was conducted after months of covert investigation by the New Guinea Islands (NGI) Investigation Task Force Team, dating back to December after the management of Newcrest Mining Limited reported gold theft at the mine site. “This special investigation started last August to July this year, after Newcrest Mining Ltd (NML) contractors’ bank accounts were flagged for receiving huge sums of money transferred from reputable gold buying companies outside of Lihir Island,” he said. “The investigations uncovered a syndicate comprising processing and mechanical technicians in the processing plant and fix maintenance departments who have access, through notified work orders, to high value gold bearing material recovery areas within the plant. “It is through repair and maintenance work on pregnant solution line pipes, heat exchangers and stripping columns that these NML employees and contractors scrape off these gold solutions that turn to solid as they build up inside these pipes and machineries. “These scraped and washed off gold were then smuggled out of Lihir by this syndicate.”

## LOs distance themselves from forum

National, 23 August 2023



Alfred Angapanga, (seated left) and Terence Mandalo Tomai (middle) with Gas to Electricity landowner representatives in Port Moresby yesterday. – Picture supplied

GAS to Electricity (GTE) landowners of Hela yesterday distanced themselves from the Mining Development Forum in Wabag, Enga, claiming they had been insulted by not being invited to the event to present their case. The forum is a prerequisite to the granting of a Special Mining Lease and involves all stakeholders who are to present their positions and be told of what are the benefits on offer to them. The Hela landowners, led by their leader Alfred Angapanga, said they were not consulted by Prime Minister James Marape and Hela Governor Philip Undialu last Friday at their meeting in Port Moresby to discuss GTE issues. Angapanga said the Hela government was not representing the power plant site landowners and the power pylon landowners, as Governor Undialu was pursuing a different business agenda.

Angapanga said: “The Power Plant site landowners and the Power Pylon easement landowners have not been invited to the forum. “They have not been invited to any discussions by their own governor. It is a slap in the face. We are not part of any forum or agreement so we will publish our position in the newspapers and our positions will be non-negotiable.” He added that the Mineral Resources Authority had not accorded any respect like they had done to other stakeholders. “On record, nobody is representing us. Anybody at the forum claiming to represent us has been bought there on their own authority and do not represent us.” GTE landowners cover four local level government areas from the gas generated power plant at Hides Nongoli through two LLGs of the Prime Minister’s electorate of Tari Pori and to Porgera Paiela.

There are 270 power pylons which stand on customary land. Ever since the closure of the mine, the lease of the power line route has ceased and the land has reverted to customary ownership. At last week’s meeting, Undialu outlined 16 demands for the GTE business which included a review of the Hides GTE Memorandum of Agreement and the possible transfer of the Power Generation Plant to the Hela provincial government. Terence Mandalo Tomai of the Power Plant site ILG1644 said the governor’s interests were not theirs. Tomai said the landowners were bound by the commitments they made at the mine warden’s hearing in Tari on Aug 2.

## Marape urges unity in setting up PNG's New Porgera mine

Radio New Zealand, 23 August 2023



Porgera gold mine. Photo: [Richard Farbelini at English Wikipedia / Public domain](#)

A forum in Wabag in Papua New Guinea's Enga Province is aiming to pave the way for the earliest possible re-opening of the Porgera mine. The Prime Minister James Marape said there must not be any more delays in reopening the mine. It follows a ruling by the Supreme Court on Monday which tossed out an attempt to halt the proceedings of the New Porgera Development Forum, which is set to address all significant concerns among stakeholders. That was scheduled to take place in Wabag on Tuesday but is going ahead from Wednesday and expected to last for more than two weeks. "Under my administration, the government is committed to ensuring a more favourable arrangement in the New Porgera, building upon the insights gained from the past three decades," Marape said. The prime minister has called on all stakeholders to engage in the development forum proceedings. He met with leaders in Hela Province to ensure the electricity supply for the mine is not disrupted.

Two years ago the Hela stakeholders submitted a list of 16 demands concerning the supply of gas for electricity generation for Porgera. Marape said he had reassured the Hela leaders that the landowners of the area where power pylons are erected between Hides and the New Porgera Mine would not be excluded from the benefits. "The Hela Provincial Government has raised valid concerns regarding the lack of substantial review concerning landowner matters in relation to power generation," Marape said. In April the PNG Government reached agreement with Barrick Gold and its partner Zijin, to re-open the mine, which has been shut down for three years after Port Moresby refused to roll over the lease agreement. The New Porgera mine is to have majority ownership held by the PNG Government but first other stakeholders need to be convinced to allow this to happen.

## Western to see changes through govt scheme

National, 22 August 2023

THE Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) has spent more than K600 million since 1997 on projects in Western and will also fund the upgrading of the Kiunga-Tabubil highway, an official says. Chief executive officer and managing director Kedi Ilimbit said people of Western would see "more changes through the Government's Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme". Ilimbit said during the signing of project agreements for the highway in Kiunga and Daru road sealing that the company had supported high-impact priority projects in Western and West Sepik in health, education, law and

justice, transport, infrastructure and utilities. Phase one of the Tabubil-Kiunga highway is currently underway.



Phase two of the Daru road sealing will begin soon. The project is important as Daru is the provincial capital and where the provincial headquarters is located. The Government increased its tax credit scheme for mining project developers from 0.75 per cent to 2 per cent in 2022. It is expected to help complete the projects and provide OTML with the opportunity to further fund new projects in the impact areas. The agreement was signed by the OTML and construction company China Railway Construction Engineering Group Co Limited in Port Moresby last month.

### **Porgera mine forum to go ahead**

National, 22 August 2023

THE Porgera mine development forum will take place in Wabag, Enga today, following a Supreme Court ruling yesterday giving it the green light to go ahead. It was to have started yesterday but the Supreme Court had to rule on an application for a restraining order to stop it. The court rejected the application yesterday. Enga Governor Sir Peter Ipatas and Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala yesterday confirmed that the mining development forum, an important step towards the re-opening of the Porgera mine, would be held in Wabag today. Prime Minister James Marape welcomed the Supreme Court ruling and urged all parties involved in the new Porgera mine to avoid any further delays in its reopening.

The forum will enable the earliest possible reopening of the mine. It is expected to take at least two weeks to address all pertinent concerns among stakeholders. “The New Porgera Development Forum is a required step to reopen the mine – a matter of great national significance,” he said. “Unnecessary delays must be avoided.” He acknowledged the various outstanding issues among landowners which should be thoroughly discussed during the forum. “The Government is committed to ensuring a more favourable arrangement in the New Porgera, building upon the insights gained from the past three decades,” he said.

“(This) is the first step in a process that will span at least two weeks, allowing for a comprehensive resolution of all pertinent matters.” Sir Ano said the forum “sets the basis for a formal hearing to seek the views of the parties that the minister believes will be affected by the granting of a Special Mining Lease No 13”. He said their views should be represented formally through position papers.

“The development forum is to deliberate on the position papers, facilitate negotiation, and establish agreement on the benefit-sharing arrangements and distribution mechanism,” he added.

### **Porgera Mine Development Forum to proceed as planned**

Post-Courier, 21 August 2023

The Porgera Mine Development Forum can commence as per its schedule following the uplifting of the National Court interim injunction and the refusal of a stay injunction by the Supreme Court this morning. Last Friday, several aggrieved SML individuals who are members of the Porgera Landowners Association successfully obtained an interim injunction from the National Court stopping the forum from commencing pending a Supreme Court challenge by the plaintiffs against the same respondents in the High Court. Deputy Chief Justice Ambeng Kandakasi granted the injunction sought by the Association on Friday and stayed the Development Forum from taking place today.

This morning, a one-man bench of the Supreme Court who heard the application for interim injunction refused the reliefs sought determining that the appeal is for a consent order and that it is not premised on the mining development forum that will be underway shortly nor is it made against the 25 sub-clan agents whom the appellants are seeking to restrain, therefore, the interim injunction is refused. This means there is now nothing stopping the development forum from taking place. Meanwhile, acting MRA Managing Director Jerry Garry had earlier told Post-Courier that preparations and mobilization of various stakeholders and State Teams have been well underway. Thus the forum dates will be rescheduled now that all legal barriers have been cleared.

### **Hela LOs demand good deal on power supply**

National, 21 August 2023

Prime Minister  
James Marape



PRIME Minister James Marape met a group of Hela leaders on Friday to address landowners' concerns over electricity supply from the PNG LNG project in Hides to the new Porgera Mine. The talks centered on the landownership in relation to the power pylons erected along the route. “The Hela government raised valid concern regarding the lack of review concerning landowner matters in relation to power generation,” Marape said. He passed on the task of examining power-generation perspectives to Petroleum and Energy Minister Kerenga Kua and his team. “An agreement has been reached to organise a development forum in Tari to address the landowner issues linked to the New

Porgera startup, ensuring that these concerns are adequately communicated to the government,” he said.

Marape stressed the need for an immediate resolution before the reopening of the new Porgera mine. Submissions by Hela leaders in September 2021 regarding the mine outlined 16 demands – eight of which were “non-negotiable”. One of the eight involves the review of the Hides Gas-to-Electricity Memorandum-of-Agreement for PDL 1. Another key issue relates to the PDL 1 PNG Licence-based benefit-sharing agreement. IT is unlikely that the much anticipated National Day start-up of the mothballed Porgera gold mine will take place today following an interim court order restraining the development forum from happening. A development forum is a prerequisite to a mine start-up.

Deputy chief justice Ambeng Kandakasi, on Friday, issued an interim order restraining the development forum from proceeding today until the ruling on an injunction application (SCA 96/2021) pending before the Supreme Court, or until further orders from the court. The matter returns to court at 9.30am today. Lawyer Ralph Saulep, acting for Porgera SML1 landowners Nelson Akikio and Ruben Loli Nalepe, said: “By virtue of s.155 (6) of the Constitution, all citizens and officers of the Government (national and provincial) must abide by the restraining order.” Kandakasi said the Government must respect the court’s jurisdiction while important matters and issues regarding the new mine are pending before the Supreme Court and allow the courts to exercise their jurisdiction.

### **Banaban community seeks apology from NZ government over mining**

Susana Suisuiki, RNZ Pacific Journalist, Radio New Zealand, 21 August 2023



Rabi Island community volunteer Rae Bainteiti Photo: Rabi Island Community Hub

The Banaban community are seeking justice for what happened on their island and to its people over a century ago. In the early 1900s, Banaba or Ocean Island was mined for phosphate resulting in a barren and uninhabitable land that forced its people to relocate and settle in Rabi Island, Fiji in 1945. The extractive mining project led by the British Phosphate Company (BPC), equally owned by Australia, the UK and New Zealand, is a history that is largely unknown or forgotten about. However, the Banabans of today say they still live with the grief and trauma brought on by the destructive practice. They point out that not only had they [lost their land, they lost their language and cultural identity](#).

The displacement of the Banaban people has meant their rights and land development is safeguarded by Kiribati - which Banaba is part of - and Fiji to which Rabi Island community hub volunteer, Itinterunga Rae Bainteiti describes it as "falling into the cracks of two countries". In order for the Banaba community to move forward and restore their sense of dignity, they are seeking a [formal apology](#) from the New Zealand government. Community leaders hope to go to New Zealand before the end of the year to present a petition to Parliament requesting an apology. Bainteiti said seeing the impact the [Dawn Raids apology](#) had on New Zealand's Pasifika community in 2021 spurred him on. "I was in New Zealand at the time when the discussions around the Dawn Raids were happening," he said. "Then I was in Rabi when the apology took place and for me - as part of a community that was uprooted from our ancestral home because of extractive industries and phosphate mining - I think that's what our community needs right now."

In February this year, Auckland's Silo Park hosted an [art exhibition created by the Banaban community in Auckland and Rabi](#), by the International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD) and the Banaban Women's Organisation (BWO). The exhibition depicted Banaba's history, the lingering impacts mining has on Banabans today and stories of resistance. At the same time, ICAAD launched its petition calling on the New Zealand government to deliver an apology and outlining several recommendations. Banaban cultural performer Zachary Bakaua said the exhibition was an opportunity to clear up common misunderstandings of Banaba. "To us, our identity became lost," he said. "We're using the i-Kiribati language and therefore people think we're i-Kiribati but we're not." Bakaua also said the struggles are ongoing for the Banabans on Rabi island "We're experiencing climate change, sea rises and water shortage."

University of the South Pacific student Kimere Nemia said as a Banaban living in Fiji, it can feel isolating. "We're an even smaller community in Fiji, we don't normally hold exhibitions like this in Suva," she said. "But we need more exposure of our community." Rae Bainteiti said other countries which also mined Banaba have also yet to acknowledge their actions, however he said New Zealand's history of championing social issues in recent times is commendable. "New Zealand is in the best position to step up with facilitating this public apology," he said. "New Zealand has always been the big brother or sister for the Pacific in policies and development agendas for the Pacific."

"We would love to see the leadership just stepping up and seeing where they could potentially assist our very marginalised communities with supporting education, scholarship, health because for over 70 years, the development of Rabi has really been constricted, restricted to the fact that part of the development is really falling in the cracks of two countries." "We're also asking in this petition if they could come and investigate and see how the Banabans are doing now." As New Zealand's general elections looms, Bainteiti said the Banaban community will continue to engage with the government in Wellington even if there's a change in leadership. "If there is a change in government we will still pursue the conversation with the new government," he said. "Our work has not been really about who's in politics and who's not. When we were in Auckland in February, we worked with every politician because it is an advocacy work that shouldn't be politicised - it is a moral obligation."

## **K53 million for 2022 royalties**

National, 17 August 2023

K92 Mining (K92) has committed over K1 billion to be spent over the next two years on the expansion of the Kainantu Gold Mine with an eye to almost tripling production. According to a statement, the expansion would result in over a thousand new jobs being created in addition to the 1,400 created since K92 restarted the mine in 2015 as well as further business opportunities for the landowners. "To the end of 2022, the mine has generated about K53 million in royalties," the mine said.

“As provided under the memorandum of agreement (MoA), 30 per cent (K16 million) of this amount has been paid out to the provincial government and a further five per cent (K2.7 million) has been paid to the Bilimoia Landowners Association (BLA),” according to the statement.

“The balance of 65 per cent (K36 million) has been held in trust due to parties appealing the Land Tribunal Commission (LTC) determination of 2009. The process for determination of the appeal by the LTC was agreed in 2020, but then delayed due to Coronavirus (Covid-19) and more recently by the passing of one of the commissioners.” The company has backed the call by the BLA chairman for this process to be expedited. However, it is also concerned that a new decision by the LTC could also be disputed by disaffected parties leading to more delays. “K92 has sought to have the parties agree on a voluntary settlement which would allow the royalties to be paid out, however the parties have been unwilling to take this approach to date.” K92 stated that under the MoA, the Bilimoia Development Corporation (BilDevCo) was established to represent the landowners in all business opportunities.

“BilDevCo, not BLA, is therefore the landowner organisation which is a joint venture party to the three major contracts, being security, road transportation and camp catering and management. “The contracts were awarded following a tender process in which BilDevCo was involved. In 2022, these three contracts, plus a fourth for site ancillary equipment, with another landowner business company earned K75 million. “This equates to almost 30 per cent of the total of K286 million spent on procurement in PNG in 2022.” The company (K92) said it had paid all of its compensation to date. “The company currently holds K370,000 in trust relating to payments of social inconvenience, bush and nuisance, used land and lost land compensation which awaits the LTC determination mentioned to be distributed. “In the first half of 2023 alone, K92 paid K1.9 million to local communities associated with our exploration activities for casual labour, services, supplies and compensation.”

### **Minister explains Solwara 1 project**

*The Solwara 1 project has been the subject of public debate for over a decade. In a recent Parliament sitting, Northern Governor Gary Juffa suggested that the project be discontinued. Below, Attorney-General and Justice Minister PILA NININGI provides some information on the project.*  
National, 17 August 2023

### **The project**

The Solwara 1 deep-sea mining project is to mine polymetallic sulphide deposits located on the seabed about 50 kilometre north of Rabaul and 30km west of New Ireland. The project’s environment plan was approved on Dec 29, 2009, and the Mining Lease 154 on Jan 13, 2011.

### **Arbitration**

On June 19, 2012, after negotiation between the State and the developer, Nautilus Minerals Niugini Limited, the dispute on whether “financial close” had been achieved, and if so, whether the State was liable, was referred to arbitration. On Oct 7, 2011, Nautilus advised the State that it had achieved financial close, which required the State to back the project, in accordance with a State Equity Option Agreement with Nautilus executed on March 29, 2011. But the State argued that Nautilus had not raised enough money to satisfy the financial close obligation.

On Oct 2, 2013, the arbitrator handed down a partial award in favour of Nautilus in respect to the financial close issue. On Oct 23, 2013, Nautilus issued a notice to complete the purchase of 15 per cent (an agreed variation from 30 per cent) interest in the project. On Jan 23, 2014, Nautilus issued a second notice to complete and indicated damages of US\$118 million (about K430 million) for lost cash flow and costs. Based on these occurrences, the National Executive Council authorised the State’s participation in the project through the acquisition of a 15 per cent interest.



Some of the high-technology machines for the Solwara 1 project. – Picture from the Deep Sea Mining Finance website.

### **State participation**

The project is structured as an unincorporated joint venture between Nautilus Minerals Pacific Pty Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Nautilus Minerals Inc, with an 85 per cent interest, and Eda Kopa Solwara, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kumul Minerals Holdings Ltd (KMHL) nominated as the State's entity to hold its 15 per cent interest. Eda Kopa financed its participation in the project by way of a K375 million loan (about US\$120 million) from the Bank of South Pacific Financial Group Ltd on April 24, 2014. It was due for repayment on April 24, 2021. The State issued a Deed of Indemnity, in favour of both BSP and KMHL, in relation to the BSP loan, and any interest thereon dated April 24, 2014. Eda Kopa's capital injection of US\$120 million (about K437.2 million), along with a previous equity contribution of US\$1.8 million (about K6.5 million), represent its total cash contribution to the joint venture.

Funds were used to prepay its 15 per cent interest in the project, which itself had an approved budget of US\$793 million (about K2.8 billion), and a US\$2.7 million (about K9.8 million) Eda Kopa capital charge. The prepayment of the State's total contribution limited its exposure to project capital risk with Eda Kopa not required to bear any share of additional construction costs associated with project delay. First production was expected in 2017. But construction activities continued to be delayed by the lack of funds from Nautilus Minerals, resulting in a further delay of project start-up. This in turn affected Eda Kopa's ability to repay its liabilities with BSP. In 2019, in view of the State's indemnity in favour of BSP and KMHL, and to isolate KMHL from the impact of a potential collapse of the Solwara 1 project, the 15 per cent equity in project was transferred off the balance sheet of KMHL to the State.

### **Nautilus Minerals ownership**

Nautilus Minerals Inc. is a public company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. As at November 2018, it had a market capitalisation of around 50 million Canadian dollars (K135 million). Its major shareholders are MB Group (30 per cent) and Metalloinvest Holdings (20 per cent). Both were major shareholders in 2013 when the State was pressed by Nautilus to participate in the project. Nautilus has since undergone significant changes in key personnel. The chairman resigned in December 2017, and the chief executive officer resigned in August 2018 (or were terminated) over disagreements in funding strategy. There had been significant turnover in senior project staff members over the years.

### **Current project status**

The Solwara 1 project construction is still incomplete. Both the Exploration Licence and Mining

Lease are still current. Recently, the Deep Sea Mining Finance Ltd and SM2 acquired the assets of Nautilus Minerals Niugini Ltd. The new developers of the Solwara 1 project have not approached Eda Kopa for further funding. But they are continuing its operations in acknowledgement of Eda Kopa's 15 per cent interest in the project. The new developers of the project have developed new mining methods more efficient with minimal environment disturbance and low risk for the Solwara 1 project. The new developers have lodged work programme variations to effect the changes in mining methods, which will be considered by the Mining Advisory Council. Since the transfer of the 15 per cent interest in Eda Kopa from KMHL to the State, the Treasury Department has undertaken the repayment of Eda Kopa's loan with BSP.

### Questions that need answers

Has there been any confirmation that the new developers accept the contribution by Eda Kopa into the project as a complete purchase of 15 per cent interest into the project? Or, in light of the change in mining methods, have the new shareholders requested Eda Kopa to make additional payments? With the introduction of new methods to be used in the project, will the new developers advise on the environmental management plan?

## Juffa: The unknowns are too great

*Meanwhile, Northern Governor Gary Juffa recently told Parliament that seabed mining could have harmful effects on coastal communities. Here are excerpts of his address:*

"Leaders of coastal communities, if you do not stop this and do not watch this with concern, then you are failing your people. In fact, developed nations have banned seabed mining or have spoken against it because experts and scientists have stated that the unknowns are too great to ignore.

"Especially the areas that are referred to as the pelagic areas of the deep sea where life forms that are critical for the ocean begin their journey.

"The unknowns are too great.

"But, we are a developing na-

tion that does not have the scientific wherewithal to be to mitigate any negative repercussions from such an activity, we are willingly embracing this activity.

"I was quite disturbed to hear the Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala advise Parliament that the company Nautilus Ltd, that had come here in the mid-2000s and convinced us to pay them US\$300 million (about K1.1 billion) against the advice of the State Solicitor, then disappeared, re-branded itself in Canada, is now making its way back to PNG.

"This is very disturbing.

"I understand that the minister



Gary Juffa

has mentioned that he has been speaking to them.

"So perhaps he has a strategy to recoup that US\$300 million.

"And, if so, this is good to hear.

"But if not, then I believe he should develop a strategy and vigorously pursue this US\$300 million that we just gifted away to a company that has not carried out this type of activity anywhere in the world.

"In fact, seabed mining has not been undertaken in any part of this world.

"I stood against this on Oct 18, 2012.

"We received a petition with 22,000 signatures from coastal citizens who were very concerned about what would happen if this activity was to be undertaken."

### LO wants forum to be held in Porgera

By PETER ESILA, National, 16 August 2023

THE Porgera mine development forum should be held in Porgera and not Wabag, the capital of Enga, says principal landowner (LO) Nixon Mangape. "We the 15,000 SML (Special Mining Lease) landowners as well as the 15,000 LMP (Lease for Mining Purposes), want the stakeholders to see for themselves the impact of the mine in the local community," he said. "During the development forum, an hour or two should be in the programme for stakeholders to get on the helicopter and get an aerial view of Porgera. "When stakeholders see the affected communities in Porgera, it will give them a fair idea on the legacy issues of Porgera."

Mangape said some of the agreements yet to be signed were the mining development contract, re-settlement agreement, compensation agreement, fly-in-fly-out agreement and any other mining-related agreements. He said these agreements would take a year or two to be addressed “before we finalise or conclude for signing”. “There is no future for the SML landowner, the 3,000 hectares of land is gone,” he said. “Why talk about Porgera, but spending millions of Kina in Wabag on accommodation, hire cars.” According to the Mineral Resources Authority (MRA), the forum is scheduled for next Monday in Wabag.

Mangape said having such meetings in Porgera all contributed to bringing confidence back to the valley. However, he added that law and order issues should have been addressed first before a development forum. “Open the banks, schools, hospitals, markets, the court house, then we talk about development at the forum.” He said the 50,000 LOs (SML, LMP and others) appreciated the Marape Government for putting K700 million for the next seven years for the State’s 51 per cent for re-settlement. “That is just the figure,” he said. “We also want Barrick to say how much it is putting for resettlement from their 49 per cent.”

### **State agencies blamed for giving wrong information**

By REBECCA KUKU, National, 15 August 2023

STATE agencies have been blamed for providing wrong information to the Government on the re-opening of the multi-million Kina Porgera mine, resulting in the dates being changed a few times. Kompiam-Ambum MP Sir John Pundari told Parliament last week that such misinformation had disgraced the office of the prime minister and the Government. “Since the closure, there have been various dates set for its reopening, the first being Sept 16, 2020. This did not eventuate and it has been about three years now,” Sir John said. “The Prime Minister (James Marape) only makes statements upon credible advice from State agencies who are expected to deliver on these announcements,” he said. Sir John said he was one of those who supported Marape’s decision not to renew the Special Mining Lease for Barrick Niugini Limited, resulting in the closure of the mine in 2020.

Sir John said the State negotiation team, agencies and departments providing advice on Porgera to Marape must take full responsibility. “Upon whose advice was the dates given? Who is to blame for this? Is it the State Negotiating Team? Mineral Resource Authority? Treasury? Who? And have we dealt with those responsible?” he said. “Have we dealt with those who misled the people’s office twice by advising on dates to open the Porgera mine? “Can the people of PNG know how much has been paid to the state negotiating team on Porgera and any other consultant associated with these negotiations? “And how much has the country lost in corporate taxes, goods and services tax and group taxes not only from Barrick but also other companies and SMEs associated with the Porgera mine?” Marape told Sir John to forward in writing his comments to the Office of the Prime Minister.

### **Reveal revenues received from Porgera mine, govt told**

National, 15 August 2023

KOMPIAM-Ambum MP Sir John Pundari has called on the Government to tell the people the revenues from equity and royalty received over the past 30 years from the Porgera gold mine in Enga. “Porgera is a significant asset to our nation and as we get closer to opening the New Porgera, we must learn from the past,” he said. “There are audited financial reports on the revenue and expenditure of Porgera. “But I have never sighted one, even when I was the minister of finance and chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.



“The prime minister must confirm if these funds have been audited or not.” He said if they had been audited, Prime Minister James Marape should direct the auditor-general to make those audited reports available to the public. Sir John said he was an MP from Enga but was still in the dark on the revenues from the equity and royalty received over the past 30 years. Sir John said it was important before the New Porgera opened that such information be made public. He also called for an investigation into the Enga Children’s Fund.

### **K50mil worth of Santos contracts for LO firms**

National, 14 August 2023

SANTOS has delivered A\$21 million (about K50 million) of contract awards to landowner companies in its Papua New Guinea projects this year, an official says. Executive vice-president for Eastern Australia and PNG, Brett Darley, said Santos was evaluating the option to have a floating off-take and storage solution (FSO) to replace the aging Kumul Marine terminal. “It has been there since the late 90s to export the highlands liquids. “This would be the first FSO in the country.” In regards to seismic activity this year, Darley said as part of a joint venture, “we have acquired about 147km in the Eastern fold belt. “Through our joint venture, we are investing significantly in exploration at both Wildebeest and the Hides Footwall which are exciting prospects for Santos and PNG,” he said. “We are also re-building the small refinery which was damaged during the earthquake in 2018.

“The products from this refinery will mainly support our operational needs. “But we are evaluating if there is any surplus that we can sell through local land owner companies to the local community.” Darley said for nearly 70 years, following the merger of Oil Search in Dec 2021, Santos had been providing locals jobs and business opportunities. Santos has been developing its natural gas resources safely and sustainably, and powering industries and households. “We have been a long-term investor in Papua New Guinea. Our company has grown alongside PNG, and we remain committed to the nation’s long-term development and success,” Darley said. “We have been active in PNG since the 1980s, with interests in PNG LNG, producing oil fields and development projects with the Papua LNG and P’nyang gas.”

## Impacts of major mine closures to be discussed at expo

National, 14 August 2023



THE experiences and impacts on social and economic ecosystems on local communities of mine closures of Bougainville and Porgera mines will be shared in a conference in Lae this month. PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum president Anthony Smare said this would be featured during the PNG Community Affairs and National Content Conference and Expo 2023 (Canconex) on Aug 28. The Bougainville perspective will be presented by prominent Bougainvillean leaders Theresa Jaintong and Paul Nerau and the lessons from Porgera by Porgera Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Nickson Pakea and Porgera District Women’s Association president Serah Erasi. “The lessons of Panguna, and Porgera, particularly in how social and business ecosystems and infrastructure survive to benefit the local communities, are critical learnings that need to be taken on board by all stakeholders to ensure sustainable outcomes for all communities from resource development in the first place,” Smare said.

Panguna itself provided the financial foundation for PNG’s independence in 1975 and contributed immensely to the development of communities in Panguna, Bougainville and PNG. “Many Papua New Guineans who progressed to taking up key roles within the mining industry were trained by the operator of Panguna, Bougainville Copper Ltd, and have since become leaders in other mining projects in PNG, as well as abroad,” Smare said. “Whilst this project provided the necessary support to PNG, perceptions of unfair distribution of opportunities, especially from landowners, formed the basis of events leading up to the forced shutdown of this project, triggering a decade-long conflict on the island, and the loss of many lives. “Porgera in Enga contributed immensely to the development of a province, to a leader in the provision of free-education, training Engans to a level now where many hold influential positions in both the public and private sector.”

## Worry over seabed mining

By DYLAN MURRAY, National, 14 August 2023

JUSTICE Minister and Attorney-General Pila Niningi says the Government should check whether the Solwara 1 deep seabed mining project had breached any laws. Niningi joined Rabaul MP Dr Allan Marat and Northern Governor Gary Juffa in raising concern over seabed mining after it was confirmed that the abandoned Solwara One project would be resumed – but under a new developer. Niningi said the former project developer Nautilus Minerals had submitted an environment plan

which was approved on Dec 29, 2009, It was also given a mining lease (ML 154) on Oct 1, 2011. He added that the ML 154 was for 20 years, but came with conditions that the developer must comply with. The new owners, Canadian company Deep Sea Mining Finance, had acquired all the assets, including the licences belonging to Nautilus Minerals. “ML 154 and Exploration Licence 434 are still valid,” Niningi said.

“We need to look into whether the new developers have breached any laws. Review the Mining Act and Environment Act if there are any breaches that warrant the termination of the licences.” Niningi said the new developers were moving forward with the project. But if any law had been breached, the project would be stopped. The company Deep Sea Mining Finance has also made changes to the methods of mining which would be considered by the Mining Advisory Council. “This is a serious project. It should have been trialled in Canada before they brought it to PNG. Why have we become guinea pigs?” he asked. “It’s an issue that the State must take seriously. “We will be in serious trouble if we don’t have this checked.”

### **Papua LNG FID on track**

Joseph Steven, Post-Courier, 11 August 2023

THE Papua LNG project is on track for a Final Investment Decision (FID) in the first quarter (Q1) of 2024. It is understood at this stage, developers are jointly consulting various financiers from a wide range of banks and credit agencies from several countries for the US\$10 billion project. The project financing scheme of Papua LNG has triggered a wide-range interest internationally, from a variety of lending entities. Lenders appoint independent third-party experts and consultants to undertake a comprehensive due diligence, of all the possible risks any such project can face. For the Papua LNG project, this due diligence process, started late 2022, precisely, reviews in exhaustive detail all the aspects of the Project, to verify all possible risks have been properly assessed, analysed, avoided, mitigated and/offseted, to enable a fully informed decision to go ahead with the project.

This process also checks the compliance of the Project to the most demanding ESG standards, (Environmental & Societal Governance), emitted by the national PNG government and the internationally recognized IFC standards following the Equator principles. Lenders will only finance once full compliance has been demonstrated For Papua LNG, each partner in the Joint Venture such as TotalEnergies, Exxon, JX Nippon, Santos to decide its marketing policy, which remains confidential in compliance with anti-competition laws. Lenders require at FID, reassurance that enough of the LNG product will be sold at a known price for volumes and durations sufficient to cover the loans. Typical such guarantee can come indeed from long term gas sales contracts, to be disclosed to the lenders so that they can take their decision and commit to lend the funds. Worth noting that several Joint Venture partners are marketing separately, thus spreading the risk. It is understood, each bank and Export Credit Agency defines independently, its policy.

### **Fields are part of application for licence**

National, 11 August 2023

PETROLEUM and Energy Minister Kerenga Kua says both the liquid and gas Elk-Antelope fields are part of the application for the Petroleum Development Licence (PDL) for the K35 billion Papua LNG project. Kua said there were two applications for two separate pipelines. “One pipeline for the gas and liquid, and the other for the condensate to transport separately from the processing facility to the PNG LNG plant site to be further conditioned for sale,” he said. “The project joint venture (JV) partners, including the State through Kumul Petroleum Holdings Limited and landowners

through Mineral Resources Development Company, are owners of gas and liquid in proportion to their participating interest and will benefit from the sales.” Central Governor Rufina Peter had asked Kua in Parliament whether the liquid component of the field was captured in the deal. “The Elk-Antelope is a wet gas field, meaning that when the gas is brought to the surface from the reservoir, the liquid drops out from the gas, which is light oil and liquefied petroleum gas.”

### **St Barbara records net profit of K893 million**

National, 11 August 2023

ST Barbara, the parent company of Simberi Gold Mine Limited, recorded a net profit of US\$294 million (about K892.83 million) as of June 30, 2023. According to a statement, the miner plans to expand its sulphide project in PNG. Simberi Gold and its parent company St Barbara have a clear vision for the mine’s future production and the development of the sulphide project. “St Barbara has been recapitalised and restructured, following the completion of the sale of its Leonora Assets to Genesis Minerals Limited on June 30, 2023,” the statement said. “St Barbara’s strategic focus is now solely on the Simberi expansion project and its projects in Nova Scotia, Canada.

“The Simberi mine has delivered strong performances after resuming operations in 2022 and this past financial year the mine delivered 78,320 ounces of gold vs guidance of 70,000 – 80,000 oz (ounce). This was the highest production quarter since the fourth quarter (Q4) of June FY20. “The current mine life of operations has been extended through to mid-2026 before any expansion is required to enable treatment of the Sulphide ores. “Simberi contains a large mineral inventory of 4 million oz in mineral resources, including 2 million oz in ore reserves.” The business is investing significantly in preparations to expand Simberi through drilling and further optimisation of the project.

### **PNG resource boom to last 30 years: Maru**

National, 11 August 2023



PAPUA New Guinea is expecting a resource boom from next year because of at least five multi-billion kina projects in the pipeline, says International Trade and Investment Minister Richard Maru. “We don’t have just one LNG project. “We have another one coming up – the K35 billion Papua LNG with the final investment decision next year and construction,” he said. He told

investors during the Business Advantage PNG Investment conference in Brisbane yesterday that the country was looking forward to the reopening of the Porgera mine, plus the upcoming P'nyang gas, Wafi-Golpu and Frieda River projects. "The next 30 years will be a PNG century," he said. He urged investors to invest heavily in Papua New Guinea.



International Trade and Investment Department official David Joe with Maru during the conference. – Pictures supplied

"PNG will be the go-to country, where opportunities will be available," he said. "That is why we had visits from India's Prime Minister, Indonesian president, the French president recently. "They can see our potential. "It will be an exciting place for investors." He admitted that Papua New Guinea had its "fair share of challenges". "But we are working on that and with the resource boom, things are only going to get better. "This is not the time to back out on PNG." He said the Government wanted to improve the business climate and improve the cost of doing business in the country. Maru added that the Government would secure markets for investors in PNG both in the resource and non-resource sectors. "As a country, we need to secure the future market for companies in the resource and other spaces who are investing in our country," he said.

### **Grüner Goldrausch in der Tiefsee**

*Auf der Jagd nach seltenen Metallen für die elektromobile Revolution gerät der Meeresboden immer stärker ins Visier. Er steht unter dem Schutz einer UN-Behörde, die gleichzeitig Abbaulizenzen vergeben soll. Doch hat die Bergbauindustrie erst mal die Tiefsee erobert, wären die ökologischen Folgen fatal. Von Olive Heffernan, Le Monde diplomatique, 10.08.2023*

Ende Juli hatte die Internationale Meeresbodenbehörde (International Seabed Authority, ISA) eine schwierige Entscheidung zu treffen. Die 1994 durch das UN-Seerechtsübereinkommen (Unclos) gegründete Organisation mit Sitz in Kingston (Jamaika) war eigentlich verpflichtet, bis dahin ein Regelwerk für die kommerzielle Ausbeutung des Meeresbodens zu verabschieden. Sollte das nicht geschehen, wollten einige Unternehmen ihre Bergbauvorhaben auf dem Tiefseeboden auch ohne dieses Regelwerk vorantreiben. Nun hat die ISA zwar kein grünes Licht gegeben, zugleich aber die Möglichkeit offengelassen, dass diese Operationen bereits 2024 beginnen könnten. Wir stehen vor dem Beginn eines grünen Goldrauschs, bei dem seltene Metalle, die für den Übergang zu einer klimafreundlichen Wirtschaftsform erforderlich sind, in großen Meerestiefen abgebaut werden.

Für einige beginnen damit aufregende Zeiten – doch andere betrachten den Zugriff eines zerstörungswütigen Industriezweigs auf eine der letzten unberührten Lebenssphären unserer Erde als schwerwiegende Umweltbedrohung. „In technischer Hinsicht hat eine neue Ära begonnen, sodass viele Unternehmen mit dem Abbau beginnen könnten“, erläutert die Projektleiterin der Greenpeace-

Kampagne „Stop Deep Sea Mining“ Louisa Casson. „Was sich hier anbaut, ist die rasche und unbeschränkte Ausweitung des Bergbaus auf die Tiefen des Meeres“, meint Diva Amon, Tiefseebiologin am Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory der University of California. Für sie ist das „nicht zukunftsfähig“. Das sehen auch andere so: „In den letzten 200 Jahren hat es in der ganzen Welt kein einziges positives Bergbauprojekt gegeben“, meint Matthias Haeckel, der am Kieler Helmholtz-Institut für Ozeanforschung (Geomar) arbeitet.

### **Manganknollen und Kobaltkrusten**

Seit den 1960er Jahren haben Unternehmen wie auch Staaten immer wieder versucht, mineralische Vorkommen auf dem Meeresboden zu erschließen – stets ohne Erfolg. Nun hofft The Metals Company (TMC), ein Start-up aus Vancouver, schon Anfang 2024 in der Clarion-Clipperton-Zone (CCZ) tätig werden zu können. Die CCZ erstreckt sich zwischen Hawaii und Mexiko und umfasst 4,5 Millionen Quadratkilometer, was 60 Prozent der Fläche Australiens entspricht. Auf dem zerklüfteten, bis 5000 Meter Tiefe abfallenden Meeresboden der CCZ vermutet man Billionen von Knollen, die neben Mangan weitere wertvolle Erze wie Kobalt, Kupfer und Nickel enthalten.<sup>1</sup> Für einige Metalle, zu denen Kobalt und Nickel gehören, sollen die Vorkommen auf dem Meeresboden quantitativ größer sein als die terrestrischen Reserven.

Die CCZ ist Teil des internationalen Meeresbodens in den maritimen Zonen, die nicht von einem Küstenstaat als ausschließliche Wirtschaftszone (AWZ) beansprucht werden. Diese fernen Bereiche unseres Planeten unterliegen keiner offiziellen Aufsicht oder Kontrolle. Speziell der Meeresboden und seine Ressourcen stehen allerdings unter der Aufsicht der ISA. Diese internationale Behörde hat bislang 30 Explorationsverträge vergeben, die sich auf ein Gebiet von 1,4 Millionen Quadratkilometer beziehen. In diesen lizenzierten Zonen können interessierte Tiefseebergbau-Unternehmen die mineralischen Reichtümer des Meeresbodens erkunden. Die Verträge beziehen sich auf drei Typen von Ressourcen: polymetallische Knollen (wie sie in der CCZ entdeckt wurden), kobalthaltige Krusten und massive Sulfidvorkommen. Die kobalthaltigen Krusten, die an den Flanken und Krateröffnungen erloschener Unterwasservulkane lagern, enthalten hohe Anteile von anderen hochwertigen Metallen wie Platin und Molybdän, aber auch Spuren von seltenen Erden.

Das Interesse am Abbau dieser schwer erschließbaren Vorkommen ist jedoch sehr begrenzt. Die Sulfidvorkommen sind dagegen leicht zugänglich und enthalten zahlreiche Metalle, darunter Zink, Nickel, Kupfer, Gold, Silber und – in kleineren Mengen – seltene Metalle wie Indium, Germanium, Tellurium und Selenium. Diese Lagerstätten bilden sich an hydrothermalen Durchbrüchen, wo bis zu 350 Grad Celsius heißes Wasser aus dem Meeresboden dringt und sich mitgerissene Metalle um die entstandenen Kamine ablagern. Von den 30 abgeschlossenen Explorationsverträgen für Tiefseebergbau wurden 17 für Gebiete innerhalb der CCZ vergeben. Drei der Lizenzen gingen an die erwähnte kanadische TMC, die unter formeller Federführung pazifischer Kleinstaaten wie Tonga oder Nauru agiert. Im Juli 2021 beriefen sich TMC und die Regierung von Nauru im Namen ihres gemeinsamen Unternehmens Nori (Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.) auf ein obskures Gesetz, das ihnen angeblich erlaubt, binnen zwei Jahren mit dem Abbau von Mineralien zu beginnen.

Andere Unternehmen sind vorsichtiger und warten ab, bis die ISA ihre Richtlinien für den Tiefseebergbau ausgearbeitet hat. Mit ihrem dreisten Vorpreschen hat sich die TMC die beste Startposition im Rennen um die Ausbeutung dieser Ressourcen verschafft. „Ganz offensichtlich gibt es derzeit international nur einen Player, der mit dem Abbau loslegen will“, meint Pradeep Singh, Experte für Meerespolitik am Potsdamer Forschungsinstitut für Nachhaltigkeit. Die TMC betrachtet den Tiefseebergbau als rare Gelegenheit, bislang unerschlossene Vorkommen wertvoller Erze zu erschließen, die für die Entwicklung und den Ausbau vermeintlich grüner Technologien, also Elektroautos, Solarzellen oder Windturbinen, gebraucht werden. Die Schätzungen des Unternehmens gehen davon aus, dass die in den von ihm beanspruchten CCZ-Gebieten geförderten Mengen an Nickel,

Kupfer, Kobalt und Manganerzen ausreichen, um mehr als 250 Millionen Batterien für Elektroautos herzustellen.

Es gibt jedoch vielerlei Bedenken, was die ökologischen Folgen betrifft, zumal es wie gesagt noch keine Regeln für den Tiefseebergbau in diesem Bereich des Pazifiks gibt. Es besteht die Gefahr, dass lokale Arten aussterben; darunter auch Spezies, die wissenschaftlich noch gar nicht erfasst sind. Eine neuere Studie hat ergeben, dass fast 90 Prozent der in der CCZ entdeckten Tierarten der Fachwelt bislang völlig unbekannt waren. Der Abbau der Mineralien wird zudem gewaltige Sedi-mentwolken aufwirbeln, an denen Lebewesen noch in einer Entfernung von mehreren Kilometern ersticken könnten. Und wenn die bei den Arbeiten anfallenden chemischen Abfallstoffe im Ozean entsorgt werden, wird das für schwimmende Meerestiere katastrophale Folgen haben; über den kommerziellen Fischfang könnten die toxischen Substanzen am Ende auch in die menschliche Nah-rungskette gelangen.

Für Diva Amon ist es gar keine Frage, dass „der Tiefseebergbau zu einem Verlust an Biodiversität und Habitaten führt“ und so die Funktion der Ökosysteme beeinträchtigt wird. Und Matthias Haeckel weist darauf hin, dass die Auswirkungen auf die Tiefsee nicht nur ein paar Jahrzehnte, sondern „viele hundert oder sogar tausende Jahren anhalten werden“. Laut Louisa Casson beginnt nun die „intensive juristische und politische Debatte“, und der Ausgang ist ungewiss. Die ISA könnte zum Beispiel die schon vorliegenden Anträge bewilligen und damit Abbauaktivitäten ab sofort ermöglichen. Oder die Agentur könnte alle Operationen so lange blockieren, bis die Richtlinien für den Ab-bau stehen. Das würde allerdings den interessierten Unternehmen missfallen, die ihre Pläne für die Ausbeutung der unberührtesten Zonen unseres Planeten hartnäckig vorantreiben.

Die Naturwissenschaft hat die CZZ erst vor rund 50 Jahren entdeckt, aber der Forscherdrang hat neuen Auftrieb bekommen, seitdem die Bergbauindustrie auf die Erschließung und Nutzung des Tiefseeraums drängt. Aufgrund der extremen Bedingungen – mit Temperaturen nahe dem Gefrier-punkt und einem gewaltigen Wasserdruck – ist die CCZ eine Zone niedriger Energie. Da es kaum Strömungen gibt, vollzieht sich die Sedimentablagerung extrem langsam (pro Jahrtausend allenfalls ein Zentimeter). Und weil auch die oberen Wasserschichten eine niedrige Produktivität aufweisen, sinken nur wenig Nährstoffe in die Tiefseezonen ab. Entsprechend ist das Leben auf dem Meeres-boden alles andere als üppig, wenngleich äußerst vielfältig. Für viele Tiefseearten sind die soge-nannten Knollenwälder, die sich über Millionen von Jahren gebildet haben, ein wichtiges Habitat, das durch nichts ersetzt werden kann. Nach den Regeln der ISA hat ein Lizenznehmer bis zu 15 Jahre Zeit, um die beanspruchten Gebiete zu erforschen. Für eine spätere kommerzielle Nutzung ist für die CCZ ein Standardvertrag mit einer Laufzeit von 25 bis 30 Jahren vorgesehen. Dann wird je-des Unternehmen in einer Zone von 75 000 Quadratkilometern (was der Fläche der Beneluxstaaten entspricht) die Manganknollen am Tiefseeboden „abernten“ können. Und zwar mit Geräten von der Größe eines Traktors, die pro Stunde eine Ernte von etwa 400 Tonnen schaffen, pro Woche also knapp 70 000 Tonnen. Eine einzige dieser Maschinen könnte während ihrer Lebensdauer 10 000 Quadratkilometer des Tiefseebodens abgrasen.

Die stockfinstere Zone der Ozeane zwischen 4000 und 6000 Metern unterhalb des Meeresspiegels sind bislang wissenschaftlich kaum erforscht. Umso weniger kann man die Auswirkungen abschät-zen, die jahrzehntelange Schürftaktivitäten auf derart riesigen Gebieten haben werden. Erste Auf-schlüsse sollen die kleinformigen Testoperationen von Unternehmen wie TMC liefern. Aber Um-weltschützerinnen und Wissenschaftler warnen vor weiteren Schritten mit dem Argument, es gebe noch zu viele Ungewissheiten und zu wenig Forschungsergebnisse. Immer mehr Regierungen, aber auch Firmen nehmen solche Bedenken inzwischen ernst. Die Tiefseebiologin Amon bringt es auf den Punkt: „Wir sind noch immer dabei, herauszufinden, welche Spezies da unten leben; und schon gar nicht wissen wir, wie diese Spezies und das Ökosystem insgesamt reagieren werden.“ Die Skep-sis hat dazu beigetragen, dass inzwischen viele Staaten ein allgemeines Moratorium fordern, das so

lange gelten soll, bis die ökologischen Auswirkungen genauer erforscht sind. Dem Aufruf, der von Chile, Costa Rica und Frankreich initiiert wurde, sind unter anderem Spanien, Deutschland, Neuseeland, Irland und die Schweiz gefolgt; zuletzt hat sich am 10. Juli Kanada als 17. Land der Forderung angeschlossen.<sup>2</sup>

Die Bedenken betreffen nicht nur den Abbau der polymetallischen Knollen, sondern auch die weiträumigen Auswirkungen bergbaulicher Operationen auf dem Tiefseeboden, bei denen Sedimente aufgewühlt werden, die sich über zehntausende Kilometer ausbreiten können. Zudem müssen die Unternehmen die Sedimente, die sie zusammen mit den Knollen über ein Rohrsystem zur Wasseroberfläche hochpumpen, wieder in tiefere Schichten entsorgen, wobei die noch zu bestimmende Mindestdiefe bei 1000 Meter liegen dürfte. Das ist ein Problem, weil bislang kaum erforscht ist, was die Operationen ganz allgemein für das Leben in der Wassersäule der CCZ bedeuten. Die in tieferen Meeresschichten treibenden Sedimente bedeuten wahrscheinlich ein Problem für Meerestiere wie Garnelen oder Großfische. Nach einer jüngst publizierten Studie, an der Diva Amon beteiligt war, dürfte sich der Thunfischfang bis 2050 zum Teil in die CCZ hinein verlagern. Aufgrund der Erwärmung des Pazifischen Ozeans wird sich die Population der drei wichtigsten Thunfischarten in dieser Zone um 10 bis 30 Prozent erhöhen.<sup>3</sup> Das würde bedeuten, dass die negativen Folgen des Tiefseebergbaus für den Fischfang – und damit die Nahrungsmittelversorgung – künftig immer größer werden.

Eine andere Studie über die Kobaltkrusten im Nordwestpazifik kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass selbst der Tiefseebergbau in einer kleinen Zone zu riesigen Verlusten an maritimem Leben führt, die weit über diese Zone hinausreichen. Bei der von der japanischen Regierung finanzierten Studie wurde eine Testoperation ausgewertet, bei der von einem Tiefseeberg ein 120 Meter langer Streifen kobalthaltiger Kruste abgeschürft wurde. Die Operation dauerte nur zwei Stunden, hatte aber unvorhergesehene Folgen. Ein Jahr nach dem Test war die Dichte der schwimmenden Lebewesen (inklusive Fische und Shrimps) direkt am Schürfort um 43 Prozent und in den angrenzenden Gebieten um 56 Prozent geschrumpft.<sup>4</sup> „Selbst eine einzige Abbauoperation hätte räumlich weitreichende Auswirkungen auf die Wassersäule wie auf den Tiefseeboden“, erklärt der Niederländer Matthew Gianni, der verschiedene UN-Einrichtungen berät und 2004 eine NGO namens Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) mitbegründet hat. „Wie genau die aussehen werden, weiß man nicht, aber in jedem Fall werden sie schwerwiegend und von langer Dauer sein.“

Obwohl sich die Zuständigkeit der ISA auf unseren halben Planeten erstreckt, wurde die Arbeit der Agentur bisher von der Öffentlichkeit kaum wahrgenommen. Als die ISA 1994 von der UNO als unabhängige Behörde etabliert wurde, bekam sie einen ungewöhnlichen und widersprüchlichen Auftrag: Sie soll den Abbau von Bodenschätzen in der Tiefsee beaufsichtigen und fördern und zugleich dieses größte und am wenigsten erforschte Habitat der Erde vor Schaden bewahren. Mit der Gründung der ISA kamen die Vereinten Nationen einer Forderung mehrerer Entwicklungsländer nach, die an der Ausbeutung der Ressourcen des internationalen Tiefseebodens partizipieren wollten. Nach dem UN-Seerechtsübereinkommen (Unclos) von 1994 gehören die in internationalen Gewässern lagernden Bodenschätze zum „gemeinsamen Erbe der Menschheit“; das heißt auch ihre Ausbeutung muss allen Ländern zugutekommen.

Dass die armen Länder vom Tiefseebergbau profitieren können, dient als gängiges Argument gegenüber kritischen Stimmen, die auf die offensichtliche und irreparable Schädigung der Umwelt verweisen. Eine der potenziellen Einnahmequellen für Entwicklungsländer ist die Partnerschaft mit Unternehmen, wobei Erstere lediglich eine formelle Rolle als sponsoring state (bürgender Staat) übernehmen. Wenn ein Antrag auf Aktivitäten in internationalen Tiefseeregionen von einem Industrieland gestellt wird, muss laut den aktuellen ISA-Regeln die betroffene Nutzungszone groß genug sein für zwei Abbauoperationen. Diese Zone, die aus mehreren Teilzonen bestehen kann, wird dann in zwei Gebiete von ungefähr gleicher Werthaltigkeit aufgeteilt, von denen nur eines dem

Antragsteller überlassen wird. Die andere Hälfte bleibt als „reserviertes Gebiet“ der Erschließung durch ein Entwicklungsland vorbehalten.

Ein Entwicklungsland kann sich aber natürlich mit einem Unternehmen zusammenschließen, das die Bodenschätze in seiner „reservierten“ Hälfte erkundet. Genau dies haben bislang die pazifischen Ministaaten Kiribati, Cookinseln, Tonga und Nauru gemacht, wobei der Nutzen – etwa im Fall Nauru – ein rein finanzieller ist. Die seit 1968 unabhängige Republik Nauru (Ripublikin Naoero), der kleinste Inselstaat der Welt, ist ein klassischer failed state, der geprägt ist von Korruption, Inkompetenz und Umwelterstörung als Folge des seit 1906 betriebenen Phosphatabbaus. Dabei gehörte Nauru früher zu den nominell reichsten Ländern der Welt. Noch in den 1970er Jahren hatte es ein Bruttoinlandsprodukt von 2,5 Milliarden US-Dollar, das glatt ausgereicht hätte, um den Lebensunterhalt der Bevölkerung über viele Generationen zu sichern. Die Staatseinnahmen stammten aus dem Abbau der scheinbar unerschöpflichen phosphathaltigen Guanoschichten, die Seevögel über Jahrtausende hinterlassen hatten.<sup>5</sup>

### **Vernichtung noch unbekannter Arten**

Aber der bis 1970 von britischen und australischen Unternehmen betriebene Phosphatabbau, bei dem die Erdschichten über den Lagerstätten abgetragen wurden, hat 80 Prozent des naurischen Territoriums unbewohnbar gemacht. Heute ist das Eiland ein kahler, unfruchtbarer Flecken Land, auf dem keine Pflanzen mehr wachsen. Die aus dem Phosphatabbau gewonnenen Einnahmen wurden von unfähigen Regierungsfunktionären verschleudert. Das macht die Vorstellung umso attraktiver, dass man durch die Ausbeutung des Tiefseebodens – und zumal weit von der Insel entfernt in internationalen Gewässern – etwas von dem früheren Reichtum wiedergewinnen könnte. Allerdings ist unklar, welcher Anteil an den Profiten an das kommerzielle Unternehmen, in dem Fall an die TMC, gehen wird – und welcher Anteil nach den vertraglichen Abmachungen dem Sponsoring State verbleibt.

Louisa Casson befürchtet, dass Nauru mit seiner „sehr geringen Einwohnerzahl, einer langen Ausbeutungsgeschichte und einem sehr niedrigen Bruttoinlandsprodukt“ am Ende sehr wenig abbekommen wird. Zugleich könnte man den Ministaat für Schäden verantwortlich machen, die von Operationen herrühren, an denen er als Bürge beteiligt ist. Bei einer unklaren Rechtslage, so Casson, könnten die Staaten, die für das ganze Unternehmen bürgen, am Ende die Verlierer sein. Mittels der ISA wollte die UNO die Entwicklungsländer noch auf andere Weise unterstützen: Die Agentur soll sich selbst als Abbauunternehmen betätigen und dafür eine eigene Firma gründen dürfen. Dieses schlicht „Enterprise“ genannte Unternehmen soll seine Gewinne, die es als Geschäftspartner eines Sponsoring State erzielt, an Entwicklungsländer abführen. Anfangs gab es sogar die Idee, Enterprise das Monopol für den gesamten Tiefseebodenbergbau zu übertragen.

Heute ist die Vision bescheidener: Enterprise soll die Abbaulizenzen für einige der Tiefseezonen erhalten, aber darüber hinaus am Abtransport wie an der Verarbeitung und Vermarktung von Mineralien beteiligt werden, die andere kommerzielle Unternehmen aus der Tiefe fördern. Nach beiden Geschäftsmodellen wird die ISA so etwas wie eine öffentliche Bergbaufirma sein, die ihre operativen Entscheidungen unabhängig trifft. Wie das im Einzelnen funktionieren soll und was mit den Enterprise-Gewinnen geschieht, muss im abschließenden Regelwerk der ISA geklärt werden. Würde man die Gewinne an einzelne Länder abführen, würden diese nach vorläufigen Berechnungen nur kleinere Summen erhalten. Deshalb hat der meeres- und klimapolitische Experte Singh eine andere Idee: Die Gelder könnten in einen autonomen Vermögensfonds fließen, aus dem gemeinwohlorientierte Projekte, zum Beispiel für den Meeresschutz und die Klimaanpassung, finanziert werden.

Die ISA muss noch über ein weiteres kontroverses Thema befinden: Soll man die Länder, die zugleich Sponsoring State und Entwicklungsland sind, an den Enterprise-Gewinnen beteiligen? Dann

würde allerdings ein Land wie Nauru ein „zweites Stück von dem Kuchen“ abbekommen, wie es Singh formuliert: Einnahmen aus seinem Bergbauunternehmen plus die Gelder aus dem Gemeinwohlfonds. Zu klären ist fürderhin, ob Entwicklungsländer, die stark vom Abbau terrestrischer Bodenschätze abhängen – wie etwa die Demokratische Republik Kongo mit ihren Kobaltvorkommen – für Verluste entschädigt werden sollen, die ihre Wirtschaft durch den konkurrierenden Tiefseebergbau erleidet. Die größte Sorge ist derzeit, dass mit der TMC ein Unternehmen in den Startlöchern steht, bevor die Detailfragen geklärt sind. Die nächste Mitgliederversammlung der ISA wird im Oktober 2023 stattfinden. Dann sollen die Umweltschutzrichtlinien ausgearbeitet und auch die Fragen der Gewinnausschüttung geklärt werden. Allerdings ist unwahrscheinlich, dass bis dahin das gesamte Regelwerk verabschiedet werden kann.

Bevor das geschafft ist, wird die ISA keinen TMC-Antrag genehmigen. Allerdings bleibt abzuwarten, inwieweit man die Unternehmen verpflichten wird, die ökologischen Schäden ihrer Tätigkeit zu begrenzen. Zudem bleibt die Frage zu klären, wer die Verantwortung trägt, wenn etwas schiefgeht. Die entscheidende Frage lautet also, ob man der ISA angesichts ihrer widersprüchlichen Doppelrolle zutrauen kann, den Tiefseeboden wirksam zu schützen. Matthew Gianni meint: „Es wäre wahrlich fatal, wenn die ISA schon in nächster Zeit Abbaulizenzen vergeben würde, dazu wissen wir einfach zu wenig.“ Louisa Casson sieht genau dies aber möglicherweise kommen: „Die rechtlichen Möglichkeiten, diese Schürfmöner vom Tiefseeboden fernzuhalten, sind doch sehr begrenzt.“

[1 Diese geschätzte Zahl nennt ein Factsheet des Pew Charitable Trusts von 2017: „The Clarion-Clipperton Zone. Valuable minerals and many unusual species can be found on the eastern Pacific Ocean seafloor“, 15. Dezember 2017.](#)

[2 Siehe Yusuf Khan, „Canada Joins Nearly 20 Nations Calling for Halt to Deep-Sea Mining as Negotiators Meet to Agree Rules“, Wall Street Journal, 11. Juli 2023.](#)

[3 Siehe Diva J. Amon und andere, „Climate change to drive increasing overlap between Pacific tuna fisheries and emerging deep-sea mining industry“, in: npj Ocean Sustainability, Nr. 2, 11. Juli 2023.](#)

[4 Travis W. Thrashburn und andere, „Seamount mining test provides evidence of ecological impacts beyond deposition“, in: Current Biology, Nr. 33/24, 24. Juli 2023.](#)

[5 Über Guano als Objekt kolonialer Eroberungen siehe Laleh Khalili, „Erst Guano, dann Kopra, dann Kanonen“, LMD, April 2023.](#)

Aus dem Englischen von Niels Kadritzke; Olive Heffernan ist Wissenschaftsjournalistin und ausgebildete Meerestbiologin. © LMD, Berlin

## **P’nyang gas project after development, construction phase**

BY JEFFREY ELAPA, Post-Courier, 10 August 2023

The development forum and development and construction of the P’nyang gas project in the Western Province will come after the completion of the construction phase of the Papua LNG project. Minister for Petroleum Kerenga Kua said while responding to questions without notice from Western Governor Taboi Awi Yoto who wanted to know when the development forum for the landowners, the provincial government, the affected LLG and the State will be conducted. The Governor also wanted to know when the State would pass the P’nyang Gas Fiscal Stability Act to give the provincial government and the affected district development authority (DDA) access to the tune of K150 million as tax credit fund as captured in the gas agreement.

Mr Kua in his response said there are two similar projects within the same region, the Elk Antelope in Gulf and the Pynang in the Western Province, and they share the same geographical region. Therefore, the government has sequenced the two projects, by firstly starting off with the development and the construction of the Papuan LNG project hopefully by 2024 and then move over to

Pýnang, running back to back within the space of 4 years. This means that the Development Forum for Pynanag will take place in 2027 and the construction and the development would start in 2028.

Mr Kua said this sequencing is basically to run parallel simultaneously, and that is due to the fact that the country is small with a small public service, and they cannot be engaged in two similar projects at once, as technically skilled fields like these requires a lot of work. He said the State need not only the public servants but the skilled private sector contractors in such big projects and with a small workforce, they cannot be engaged in two major highly skilled projects concurrently. The Minister said the other reason is for the greater benefit of the country's economy, and that is to expand the economic benefits so the economy is sustained for a longer period and not to run concurrently and collapse the economy.

### **'Left behind by govt': Indigenous landowners oppose mining in Namosi**

Don Wiseman, RNZ Pacific Senior Journalist, RNZ, 9 August 2023



From December 2011: The people of Namosi staged a quiet protest against the proposed mining project on their land at Waisoi. Reps from Namosi Joint Venture (NJV) turned up for a meeting with the villagers in the area where the landowners are worried about the potential environmental effects and the loss of mataqali (landowning unit) lands. Photo: Facebook.com / Ricardo Morris

A community group in Fiji has called on MPs not to renew a mining exploration licence in the Namosi region of Fiji's Viti Levu. Exploration has been going on in the area for more than 50 years but this week Australian based multi-national Newcrest, through its Namosi Joint Venture, is seeking to have its exploration licence for its Waisoi site renewed. But civil society group, LAMA, or Lomani Au Maroroi Au, which approximates to 'Our Land is our Heart' is opposed to any mining in Namosi. With the backing of most landowners it has today, Wednesday, August 9, lodged an objection at parliament to a licence renewal. Spokesperson for LAMA, Sipiriano Nariva, said an open cast mine would be devastating for the community. "We talk about the environment. We have been left behind by the government. We have been left behind by the developer," Nariva said.

"They just want to cut for their mine, but they leave us with their waste. We have come across several years of exploration, but we have been left behind, we have been victimised, our environment has been terminated by this development." Newcrest said that the joint venture team had been working hard to ensure the community was both aware of and consulted about its Waisoi project, which it stressed was still at the exploration and pre-feasibility stage. It said it is currently conducting technical studies, community consultation and stakeholder engagement to try and find a commercially,

environmentally and socially acceptable development concept. When the LAMA group handed its objection to MPs at parliament earlier today, just one opposition MP and none from the government attended. Today, August 9 was chosen for the objection to be lodged because it is International Day of the World's Indigenous People.

Another Fiji NGO, SEEP or the Social Empowerment Education Programme, said it is an important day and opportunity to acknowledge the indigenous people in our communities. Executive director Chantelle Khan said in Fiji "we recognise and support our indigenous groups including Lomani Au Maroroi Au (LAMA) from the Provinces of Namosi and Naitasiri". "As stewards of some of Fiji's recognised rich and diverse biodiversity hotspot, these communities and their people are determined to safeguard their natural resources and continue fighting for their voices to be heard," Khan said. She said SEEP reminds the coalition government of President Wiliame Katonivere's statement in June this year to the World of Work Summit during the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva that Fiji joins the international community in affirming the fullest expression of Indigenous peoples' aspirations. Khan said it was time for Fiji to finally hear the cries of the indigenous people in Namosi and Nawaidina.

## **Japan the largest market for Ok Tedi copper**

Post-Courier, 8 August 2023



Japan has been and continues to be, the largest market for the purchase of Ok Tedi Mining Limited's (OTML's) copper concentrate. Currently 60 per cent of its copper concentrate is purchased by five Japanese smelter companies. This was highlighted by the company following a visit by officials from the Mitsubishi Materials Corporation (MMC). MMC is one of its leading customers of copper concentrate from Japan last week. MMC is the largest of the Japanese smelter companies in terms of concentrate demand, currently operates two smelters in Japan at Onahama and Naoshima. They also have one in Indonesia where they hold a 60.5 per cent ownership interest in the Gresik smelter.

MMC's visit to OTML holds significant importance as it signals their deep-rooted interest in forging a continued business relationship. The delegation's exploration of OTML's innovative waste management strategy, specifically, riverine disposal, highlights MMC's commitment to aligning

their operations with the principles of Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and shareholder expectations. During the visit, the MMC representatives toured OTML's mine and processing operations. They gained valuable insight into the Bige dredging and Kiunga operations, witnessing the company's commitment to sustainable practices and the work carried out by the Ok Tedi Development Foundation in the Mine and Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) communities.

## **Economy reliant on resource sector, says vice-president**

National, 8 August 2023



PNG Chambers of Mines and Petroleum senior vice president Richard Kassman speaking at the national content conference at Parliament House yesterday. – Nationalpic by KENNEDY BANI

THE Papua New Guinea economy largely depends on development projects in the resource sector, according to the PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum. Chamber vice-president Richard Kassman said during the National Content conference in Port Moresby yesterday that good government policies directed the mining and petroleum development projects to contribute more to the economy. "It impacts the economy through skilled labour employment and international and national stakeholder business investment opportunities," he said. The conference is aimed at developing shared value in trade, investment and business opportunities between the Government, private sector businesses and project developers to strengthen and build the country's health, education, infrastructure, energy and socio-economic development areas. "The PNG economy largely depends on development projects in the resource sector," Kassman said.

"The Government aims to drive a national content policy that centered on shared value systems Papua New Guineans have been taught for generations." Kassman said the national content policy promoted the participation and development of national capital, labour, goods and services and technology in the planning and development of major resource projects. The policy is expected to incorporate other economy-stimulating policies like the recently circulated draft manufacturing policy and national trade policy. It would act as a guideline on how the government looks at creating sustainable businesses, economic and employment opportunities for generations after mining development projects cease. Kassman said the country's young unskilled labour from schools and tertiary institutions as the key toward increasing the country's skilled labour in trade areas like heavy equipment fitters, operators and technicians. "The Government's focus is on using a methodology to select development projects that are sustainable and that would influence the country's government business and public-private partnerships through investments in agricultural farming and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and encouraging national entrepreneurship."

## **K20.9bil contributed to economy**

By DANIEL EALEDONA, National, 8 August 2023

THE PNG Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project brought in K20.9 billion to the national economy since it began in 2014, according to operator ExxonMobil PNG Limited. PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum senior vice-president Richard Kassman told the national content conference in Port Moresby yesterday that the project had contributed a lot to the economy. Of that K20.9 billion, the petroleum project gave about K8.6 billion for its tax compliances, and the same amount to Kumul Petroleum Holdings. ExxonMobil had also contributed around K1 billion for development levies and paid about K1.6 billion to the Mineral Resources Development Company (MRDC). “The country has the opportunity to transition young people into skilled-labour training for upcoming development projects. “When a resource project is developed, the demand for goods and services and skilled labour is very high.”

He said the country could engage through the developer’s partners in up-skilling youths in the resource development provinces. He mentioned trade education training at institutions such as the Port Moresby Technical College and the Don Bosco Technical Secondary School and institute. Kassman said capturing local work force development and employment opportunities in the national content policy would ensure that the country had the human resources for future resource projects. Kassman said the reopening of the Porgera mine, and projects including the Papua LNG, Pasca A, P’nyang and Wafi-Golpu would provide employment and business investment and opportunities. Kassman said there were already PNG experts working in mines overseas. “If the country creates skilled labour for development projects, these Papua New Guineans could in the future be exposed to international mines and indirectly support the economy of this country.”

## **Govt committed to forums on Porgera mine**

By PETER ESILA, National, 7 August 2023



Porgera Mining Lease landowner Philip Mungalo expressing his views in Porgera, Enga, recently.  
– Picture supplied

THE Governments still has its eyes on Sept 16 as the reopening date for the Porgera mine despite the deferral of the development forum, Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala says. Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) acting managing director Jerry Garry told The National the development forum was delayed to allow for Prime Minister James Marape and Sir Ano to be present for the opening. He added that a new date would be announced once Marape and other important stakeholders confirmed their availability. Marape, in a statement, last Saturday, said the forum was expected to

happen next Monday (Aug 14) in Wabag. He said the development forum would involve landowners from provinces directly impacted by the mine including Enga, Hela, Western and West Sepik.

Sir Ano said the Government remained committed to issuing the Special Mining Lease (SML) for the Porgera gold mine at the end of the month. As per section three of the Mining Act 1992, a mining minister is required to call a development forum for a mining project. Development forums trigger benefits negotiations processes leading to a memorandum of agreement. Meanwhile, the warden's hearings for the Porgera mine ended last Monday. The hearing was held at Paiam oval in Porgera at the beginning of the week, and in Tari Town Square, Hela, last Tuesday, with regards to the SML 13 and 15 supporting tenements.

## **No to seabed mining, says Juffa**

By JESHER TILTO, National, 7 August 2023

NORTHERN Governor  
Gary Juffa



NORTHERN Governor Gary Juffa says seabed mining is a serious issue that can have harmful effects on the country's coastal communities. "Leaders of coastal communities, if you do not stop this and do not watch this with critical concern, then you are failing your people," he said. "In fact, developed nations have banned seabed mining or have spoken against it because experts and scientists have stated that the unknowns are too great to ignore. "Especially the areas that are referred to as the pelagic areas of the deep sea where life forms that are critical for the ocean begin their journey. "The unknowns are too great," Juffa added. "But, we are a developing nation that does not have the scientific wherewithal to be to mitigate any negative repercussions from such an activity, we are willingly embracing this activity." Juffa said this during the grievance debate in Parliament on Friday.

"I was quite disturbed to hear Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala advise Parliament that the company, Nautilus Ltd, that had come here (in the mid-2000s) and convinced us to pay them US\$300 million (about K1.1 billion) against the advice of the state solicitor and disappeared then re-branded itself in Canada and is now making its way back. "This is very disturbing and I understand the minister has mentioned he has been speaking to them so perhaps he has a strategy to recoup that US\$300 million and if so this is good to hear. "But if he does not then I believe he should develop such a strategy and we should vigorously pursue this US\$300 million that we just gifted away to a company that has not carried out this type of activity anywhere in the world. "In fact, seabed mining (to date) has not been undertaken in any part of the world. "I stood against this on Oct 18, 2012, and we received

a petition with 22,000 signatures from coastal citizens who were concerned about what would happen if this horrible activity were to be undertaken.”

### **State responds to agreement with Nautilus, says A-G**

National, 7 August 2023

JUSTICE Minister and Attorney-General Pila Niningi says a response will be made on the agreement between the State and Nautilus on the seabed mining project. He was responding to questions by Rabaul MP Dr Alllan Marat if the Minister responsible could seek advice from the state solicitor on how they could stop the proposed seabed mining project. “There are talks that the company (Nautilus) responsible for seabed mining is planning to return and some of us (provinces with coast lines that could be impacted by the activity) don’t want the seabed mining to come back,” Marat said.

He said the undersea mining project had been floated and entered into by the State and Canadian firm Nautilus in the early to mid-2000s but resistance by some sectors of society including Members of Parliament, environmental watchdogs, provincial governments and landowners, as well as legislative setback and a lack of funding on both sides had seen the project shelved indefinitely. “My question to Minister Niningi is whether he could advise the State Solicitor to go through the relevant clauses for the previous agreement between Nautilus and State that tend to preserve the existence of this agreement and just forget the mining,” Marat said. He said Solwara One project was the initial attempt to mine the sea floor of the Bismarck Sea and it had garnered great opposition from both local and international groups.

### **MRDC sponsors LOs conference**

Post-Courier, 4 August 2023

With three weeks to go until the start of the inaugural PNG Community Affairs and National Content Conference and Expo (CANCONEX), leading landowner Trustee company, Mineral Resources Development Company (MRDC), has stepped in as a Principal Sponsor for the event, which take place from August 28 to 30 at the PNG University of Technology in Lae, Morobe Province. The event will be opened by Prime Minister James Marape with a keynote address on local content. MRDC managing director Augustine Mano, when confirming Principal Sponsorship of CANCONEX, highlighted the importance of bringing together landowners from across the resource sector, who are an integral part of project success. “As the Trustee Shareholder for landowner interest across mining, petroleum and energy projects, MRDC is pleased to support this worthy initiative,” Mr Mano said.

Landowners are critical to the development and sustainability of resource projects, and CANCONEX provides the perfect opportunity for landowners to engage, share experiences, and collaborate in areas of mutual interest, to ensure maximum benefits are realised. MRDC is therefore proud to be the first Principal Sponsor, for this inaugural event. We look forward to supporting this initiative, to ensure its success.” Through the theme ‘Promoting National Participation for Sustainable Communities’, discussions on Community Affairs, Business Development, Local Contracting, National Content, Community Investment, Women & Youth Development, and Access to Finance are among topics which will be covered across the three-day event.

In response, PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum President Anthony Smarè thanked MRDC for coming on board as a principal sponsor for CANCONEX. “MRDC are a natural partner and principle sponsor of CANCONEX. Since the announcement of CANCONEX, to, we have witnessed an

overwhelming number of participants and organizations from both public and private sectors who have registered,” Mr Smare said. This demonstrates the appetite for this forum, which is tailored to providing a platform for discussion of how landowners and other Papua New Guineans can maximise their participation in the benefits of resource projects.

### **Marape impressed with MRDC**

Post-Courier, 4 August 2023

PRIME Minister James Marape yesterday hailed the Mineral Resources Development Company (MRDC) as a success story which has evolved from an exploration company to an investment powerhouse with assets belonging to landowners worth over K7 billion today. Marape singled out MRDC for praise when presenting its audited financial statements for 2019 and 2020 to Parliament. He said the audited financial report showed impressive growth by the company over a period of time. “MRDC was established in 1975 by founding PM Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, initially as an exploration company, to explore and develop PNG’s vast mineral resources,” Marape said. “Since then, through policy changes, it has evolved into a highly successful management company, managing a diversified portfolio of investments for project area landowners.

The PM said historically, MRDC used to managed the State’s interest in various resource projects. But the Morauta Government in 2002 divested the State’s interest from MRDC and merged them with Oil Search Ltd. He said since then, left with only the project area landowners’ interests, MRDC has grown from strength to strength. “The MRDC Group was worth only about K390 million in 2006. Today, it’s assets under management are worth over K7 billion.” He said the Group’s diversified portfolio of assets include investment in banking, airline, hotel and hospitality, health-care, real estate and commercial office space, and power generation, amongst others. They have shareholding in Bank South Pacific, the largest commercial bank in the pacific region; airline companies PNG Air and Hevilift, and Pacific International Hospital, which provides modern innovative health care services.

Investments that the MRDC Group own 100% include the Star Mountain Plaza, Dirio Gas and Power Ltd which is providing power to Port Moresby city, the Pacific Property Trust, which owns prime real estate in downtown Port Moresby CBD, and other businesses including the Hohola Service Station. The Prime Minister said the MRDC Group consists of 14 different subsidiaries and 7 fully owned investment companies. He said the group employ thousands of Papua New Guineans, both directly and indirectly, and pay millions of Kina in corporate and salary income tax every year to the IRC. The Prime Minister said apart from investments, the MRDC has a very robust Community Infrastructure Development program which it implements in project area communities to improve quality of life for the people.

MRDC and its trust subsidiaries retain a portion of royalty and equity benefits (30%) to deliver these programs, targeting education, health and transport facilities and infrastructure in these areas. “Project area landowners live in some of the most isolated and remote parts of PNG where access is very limited, and government services almost non-existent.” He said health and education facilities built by missionaries in places like Semberigi, Kutubu, and Kikoriin the early days are now being rebuilt by MRDC to continue serving the people. “According to records made available to me, a total of K50 million has been spent in these areas in the last 10 years.” He commended MRDC and the management team led by Managing Director Mr Augustine Mano for their strong adherence to compliance and governance requirements, resulting in the tabling of the reports in Parliament. The PM said he was confident the 2021 and 2022 audited financial accounts for the company would be ready for tabling in Parliament soon.

## **Panguna to undertake second assessment project**

National, 3 August 2023

THE Panguna mine in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville will undertake its second field research and investigations studies as part of the mines impact assessment project. Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) oversight committee member Bonaventure Kenulei said this followed a successful first round of field investigations undertaken in April and May. “This was in impacted areas to identify and assess the environmental impacts of the Panguna mine, as well as the wider social and human rights impacts relating to the mine,” Kenulei said. It is the second of three field campaigns planned for the Panguna mine and one of three studies that will be outlined on the Panguna mine legacy impact assessment (PMLIA) launched by ABG President Ishmael Toroama last December. The team is made up of Bougainvilleans, Papua New Guineans and international experts and scientists.

Tetra Tech Coffey scientists rely on the support of the local communities. “Aerial topographical surveying known as LiDAR (light imaging detection and ranging) took place in July. Data was collected from a plane that flew over Panguna, the Port, Arawa town, and parts of East and West coasts,” Kenulei said. “Important data from communities impacted by the Panguna Mine was successfully collected in the first field campaign.” The impact assessment funded by the Panguna Legacy Assessment Company is an independent assessment of the environmental impacts caused by the mine, and the subsequent social and human rights impacts directly connected to these environmental impacts. The results of the impact assessment will be presented to the oversight committee next year and translated and shared with impacted communities and the public.

## **K50 billion on the cards for PNG**

BY DALE LUMA, Post-Courier, 3 August 2023



PNG – Europe Business Council president Michael Sullivan says PNG is on the verge of an unprecedented economic boom with the potential to see between K40 billion to K50 billion injected into the economy. This is with the anticipation if three of the country’s major resource projects get off the ground, which include the restart of the Multi-Billion Porgera gold mine in Enga, Papua LNG oil and gas project and the Wafi-Golpu mining project in Morobe. “PNG is on a verge of an

unprecedented boom. “When you look back at PNG’s economic history, the boom and the bust has been associated with resource projects. “Generally, it has been one project, possibly two that has been the boom and the aftermath that has been the bust.

“Once the development has stopped for a particular project, the PNG economy turns to go into a position of downturn. “Today, we are on the verge of three projects that can arise that can turn PNG on its head. “We have the reopening of the Porgera gold mine, Papua LNG currently in front end engineering and design phase and hopefully FID in the first quarter of 2024 and then you have the Wafi-Golpu project. “Three projects like these at one time will have a massive effect on PNG. “If all three projects go together, there will be somewhere in the vicinity of K40 billion to K50 billion pumped into the PNG economy. “In a small economy like PNG, that will have an enormous effect. So good times are coming for PNG.”

### **KPH gives K250m interim dividend**

Post-Courier, 3 August 2023

Kumul Petroleum Holdings presented K250 million interim dividend to the government yesterday. Managing director of Kumul Petroleum Holdings (KPHL) Wapu Sonk said KPHL is fulfilling the commitment it made in its 2023 Annual Operating Plan, that an interim dividend payment would be made mid-year. Mr Sonk said Kumul Petroleum has continued to support government through direct payment of dividends and tax and indirectly through implementation of NEC approved projects. “In 2022 KPHL paid K951 million in corporate taxation and this year, KPHL is expected to pay a similar amount. “Kumul Petroleum intends to continue with its petroleum and energy sector initiatives which will result in long-term benefits for the country. “This includes commercialising stranded gas fields and investigating domestic utilisation of gas for electricity generation and value added petrochemical chemical production.

We can only do this if KPHL has the financial capability and allowed flexibility to operate commercially,” Mr Sonk said. He said Kumul Petroleum intends to maximise national involvement in current and future LNG projects in areas of national content, especially during the construction phase. “To make this a reality, KPHL is investing in a highly advanced skills training facility together with a Fabrication Facility which will create 4000 jobs directly and indirectly on top of those that will be created by Papua LNG and other projects “Kumul Petroleum, as the national petroleum and energy company, stands ready to support the National Government and its development priorities as outlined in the recently launched Medium-Term Development Strategy and Vision 2050 plans,” he said.

### **OTML committed to helping landowner firms**

National, 3 August 2023

OK Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) is committed to ensuring the landowner companies from the mine impacted communities and Western are establish and sustain businesses in the future. This is through OTML’s vision of social values which reflects their purpose through providing business opportunities for local communities after the mine closes. OTML managing director and chief executive officer Kedi Ilimbit said OTML had contributed significantly to PNG’s economy over the years and while it continued to do so the mine also wanted to improve the livelihoods of impacted communities and the people of Western. “One way of doing that is to ensure the local people know how to run their businesses profitably and be able to sustain these businesses and the benefits to the wider population of the affected communities,” he said.

OTML aims to maximise the value of contracts to landowner companies from the current 31 per cent to 60 per cent participation by 2025 with the opportunity to venture into major contracts. Over the last 38 years, the scope of works offered to landowner businesses had been limited to minor service contracts. These contracts include standard activities such as labour hire, security, messing (catering) and accommodation, general maintenance, logistics and minor equipment hires. Major contracts were contracted to non-landowner firms. The company is now exploring opportunities to expand the scope and venture into contracts such as leasing of mining fleet, warehousing, aircraft charter, mine and exploration drilling and major contracts. In the recent past, OTML has been able to outsource and award the following major contracts to landowner companies:

- TABUBIL Development Corporation (TDC) Ltd, a subsidiary of Mineral Resources Star Mountain Group (MRSM), acquired a 51.24 per cent stake in Pacific Direct, the current operator of OTML's charter services. TDC is now the majority shareholder in Pacific Direct.
- MINERAL Resources CMCA entered into a lease agreement with OTML to supply 300 light vehicles.
- OTML outsourced its linehaul and bus services and its Workshop 1 maintenance team to its umbrella company Milum Services Ltd on May 9, 2023.

OTML continues to review its business functions and has ongoing discussions for landowner companies to participate more in OTML's businesses.

### **Enga, Hela conclude warden's hearings for Porgera mine**

National, 3 August 2023

THE warden's hearings for the Porgera mine held in Enga and Hela have been concluded successfully, says Mineral Resources Authority chief mining warden Ovi Patrick. The hearings were held at the Paiam Oval in Porgera on Monday and at the Tari Town Square in Hela on Tuesday with regards to the Special Mining Lease (SML) 13 and 15 supporting tenements. The warden's hearing, a statutory process required under Section 108 of the Mining Act (1992), is to hear the views of the impacted landowners on whether they accepted or objected to the applications. In the case of Porgera, the technical assessment report of the applications will be submitted to the Mining Advisory Council, which makes recommendations to the Mining Minister, who then submits the recommendations to the National Executive Council which then advises the Head of State on whether to grant or refuse the applications for the SML and associated tenements

The major stakeholders were the impacted landowners and the applicant, the New Porgera Ltd (NPL), represented by Barrick Niugini Ltd (BNL) executive manager Chad Coulin. Coulin outlined the company's proposals for reopening the mine and the potential benefits expected. Patrick conducted the hearing at Paiam and Tari following an application for an SML by NPL in June, to reopen the Porgera mine. The event at Paiam was attended by about 3,000 SML, Lease for Mining Purposes and Mining Easements landowners. They came with placards and banners carrying messages pertaining to their views on whether they wanted NPL to operate the mine or not. Porgera Landowners Association treasurer Nixon Mangape represented the association.

### **Papua LNG to bring business opportunities for Hiri-West**

Post Courier, 2 August 2023

Hiri-West in the Hiri-Koiari district as the host of the PNG LNG project and now will be part of the journey of Papua LNG Project the Hiri-West will benefit from many of the business opportunities that the project will bring. Hiri-Koiari member Keith Iduhu during the launch of the Koke Hanua

Mangrove Nursery in Boera Village said Papua LNG’s liquification plant will be integrated in to the foundation project, which will prove to further develop the landscape of Hiri West and once again, the contribution of the people and the community of motuans and koitabuans will be significant and he thank leaders that are representing their villages and communities. Mr Iduhu said like the foundation project, a significant portion of the capital investment will be located in the Hiri-West.



“Our people look forward to bettering their lives through job and business opportunities and indeed enhanced participation in many ways. Importantly, we must build on the experiences and learning of the foundation project. Speaking on the importance of mangrove conservation, Mr Iduhu said he is delighted with TotalEnergies PNG for working closely with all stakeholders to deliver an exemplary project (The Koke Hanua Mangrove Nursery) particularly where sustainability, biodiversity and low carbon emissions are concerned. “The Papua LNG Mangrove Conservation and Rehabilitation initiative will be centered around the Mangrove Discovery Centre at Koke Hanua with a café, mangrove nursery and board walks, aimed at attracting tourists and providing jobs and economic development opportunities to the local community. “The Hiri-Koiari District Development Authority could not be more pleased to see such a partnership launched, and the authority stands ready to progress this great initiative. “We look forward to seeing positive outcomes from this project for the betterment of our local communities and environment.”

### **Nautilus to return to PNG**

Post Courier, 2 August 2023

Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala told Parliament yesterday Nautilus was coming back to Papua New Guinea but under a different entity to operate as they had three exploration licenses still valid. Sir Ano said the company still held three exploration licenses or ELs that are all undergoing term extensions. He said this responding to Northern Governor Gary Juffa’s questions in Parliament on the latter. “Can you confirm that Nautilus Seabed Mining is planning to come back to Papua New Guinea to engage in deep sea mining activities again? “Given the past experience with Nautilus Mining, can the Minister advise us as to whether the Government has taken steps to reinforce the country’s mining laws and policies to protect the interest of our citizens and the sovereignty of our borders, and what measures have been taken,” Mr Juffa asked.

“Can the Minister also advise if the government had taken any steps to recoup the A\$300 million that was paid by the PNG tax payers, what progress has been made and if not, are there any safeguards to prevent such from re-occurring,” Juffa questioned in Parliament. Sir Ano said: “It is now clear from my discussions with this company that the company is planning to return to PNG. “This company currently holds three exploration licenses or ELs that are all undergoing term extensions. A Mining Lease ML154, a new mining lease ML 512 known as Solwara II under application. Nautilus was placed under Canadian courts supervised liquidation in 2019 that resulted in Deep Sea Mining finance limited DSM – a private company acquiring 100 per cent shares in Nautilus.



“Nautilus is now a subsidiary of this company, Deep Sea Mining Finance Limited. “DSM plans to return to Solwara project through its three-phased program one of which is initially planned to commence later this year, the concept testing would be followed by trial mining which DSM planned to commence also later this year, trial mining would be followed by commercial production which DSM plans to commence next year, right through to ML 20 year lease agreement. Department of Minerals Policy and Georhazard has addressed some of these concerns in the revised Mining Act. “As a matter of conscience and best industrial practice, the Mineral Resource Authority has always imposed conditions in licence grants whenever laws and Government grants policies are silent or insufficient or in activities that impose on environment and communities.”

### **K19bil in social benefits expected**

National 1 August 2023

THE Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) mine expects to generate over K19 billion in social benefits for the benefit of Papua New Guinea over the next 10 years within its current life, says managing director and chief executive officer Kedi Ilimbit. “OTML has tripled its value in the last six years with an extended mine life to 2033 with a possibility of further extension,” he said. Ilimbit said OTML was strengthening its operations to deliver maximum return to its shareholders, mine impacted communities and the people of PNG. He said this when speaking to OTML and business partner employees during a recent roadshow. The roadshow was conducted to inform employees about OTML’s new vision, and the improvements that were being undertaken to strengthen the mine’s operation to ensure maximum return.

“Our focus currently is to ensure existing systems and processes we have in place are improved to strengthen our operations and derive maximum value of the resources we have during and beyond the current life of mine plan of 2033,” he said. OTML’s new vision is to operate with excellence, maximising the value of our mineral resource in an environmentally responsible way, to deliver sustainable economic and social benefits to our communities and the people of PNG. “With this new vision, we are excited about Ok Tedi’s future, and will be working with all our employees, business partners, communities and shareholders to make Ok Tedi the best it can be as it provides us guidance about why Ok Tedi exists and what is the desired result of our efforts,” Ilimbit said.

## **Wafi-Golpu on track for November**

By GLORIA BAUAI, National 1 August 2023

MOROBE Governor Luther Wenge says the special mining lease (SML 10) for the K18.5 billion Wafi-Golpu gold and copper project will be signed in November. “I met with the developers recently and we have agreed on this schedule,” he said. “On Aug 16, we will hold the development forum here in Lae. “This forum is only for those people who are mentioned under section three of the Mining Act; nobody else is permitted to speak at this forum. “On Sept 16, another agreement will be signed to allow construction at Wafi-Golpu project site. “The exact date for the SML signing is yet to be determined, but once we do, which is anytime in November, operations at the project site will commence.” Wenge announced this at a public forum yesterday, assuring the people that the project would go ahead under his leadership as promised. “The development framework was already been signed,” he said. “I will not fail Morobe, nor the National Government, nor the investors.”

“I have met with Newcrest who said to sell their shares to Newmont while Harmony remains with us. “Wafi-Golpu must be on target. “This mine will answer our unemployment issues, our school fee needs and all other financial needs of this province to build infrastructure like roads and carry out other projects.” Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture Head of external relations David Wissink told The National yesterday that the Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture was currently meeting with the State negotiating team to progress the permitting of the project. Representatives of the Government and Harmony Gold mining company met to continue discussions. Harmony Gold chairman Patrice Motsepe thanked the Government for its support in the signing of the Wafi-Golpu framework and memorandum of understanding (MoU) in April. The understanding supports the Government and Harmony Gold’s intent to proceed with the tier-one project, which is subject to the finalisation of the permitting process and approvals by developer partners, Harmony Gold and Newcrest Mining Ltd.

## **Mining company waits for regulations to kick in to start work**

Caleb Fotheringham, RNZ Pacific Journalist, RNZ 1 August 2023

The head of a Canadian deep-sea mining company start-up says he wants to wait for regulations to be in place before starting "commercial-scale nodule collection" after the International Seabed Authority agreed more time was needed to develop the mining code. The Metals Company wants to mine in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in the Pacific. The ISA finished meeting in Kingston Jamaica on Friday, where member states discussed the rules and procedures of exploitation - the actual mining - which has not yet started. Member states agreed that no deep-sea mining code would be adopted, and discussions would instead continue in November and the first half of 2024. The Metals Company chief executive Gerard Barron said it was "now a question of when - rather than if - commercial-scale nodule collection will begin".

To the disappointment of environmental advocacy groups, like Greenpeace, the two-year rule still exists. This is a provision under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea that once triggered means if regulations are not adopted within two years, mining licenses could be granted under whatever rules exist. Nauru triggered the rule in 2021 that lapsed on July 9 of this year. It means The Metals Company can apply to mine under its subsidiary Nauru Ocean Resources and the ISA would have to consider the application. A statement from The Metals Company said: "Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. (NORI), reiterated its preference to submit an application for a plan of work for exploitation once these RRP's (rules, regulations and procedures) are in place. "However, consistent with NORI's sponsoring state Nauru's rights under UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), and as was reaffirmed in Friday's decision, NORI reserves its right to submit an application for a plan of work in the absence of the adoption of the RRP's." Greenpeace campaigner James Hita said he was worried, despite The Metals Company's preference to wait for the mining code to be completed.



Abstract abyss under sea background. coral reef underwater with sun ray. 3D rendering image. Photo: Copyright: [isam-puntarat](#)

"They're trying to manipulate the system to make it work in their favour," Hita said. "They're trying to push for regulations to be completed sooner than they should be, they're trying to push for deep sea mining to go ahead...they can't make any profit until they begin." The Pacific Network on Globalisation's deep-sea mining spokesperson Joey Tau said there was a strong push from environmental groups who were opposing the adoption of regulations. "We need more time; we need more science to better inform these regulations if we are to move forward." Tau said the "gate is now open" to mine with the two-year rule still in place. "That's why we're calling that no application of scope of work should be approved by the ISA and the assembly should vote for a moratorium or precautionary pause."

### **Moratorium 'makes no sense'**

However, The Metals Company environmental manager Dr Michael Clarke said NGOs like Greenpeace have made their position on a lack of data. "It always amazes me on how you can take such a forceful position when the data hasn't been collected yet, when you're not fully over the data and you haven't fully investigated the claims that you're making," he said. Clarke said The Metals Company had spent about \$US120 million on data collection in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone over the last 10 years. He said the company was coming to the end of its collection period and was almost ready to submit an impact assessment to the ISA.

Clarke added a moratorium "makes no sense" because it would result in contractors doing less exploration work and less data being collected. The list of countries calling for at least some sort of pause on deep-sea mining grew this month to over 20, with Ireland and Canada being added to the list. Gerard Barron said countries calling for a pause "introduced a degree of political uncertainty

around the timing of the adoption of the Mining Code". But the uncertainty was reduced when the council agreed to a roadmap for exploitation rules, he said. "We are obviously disappointed that the ISA failed to adopt RRP's by 9 July 2023 as we hoped two years ago," Barron said. "But we also recognise that the vast majority of Member States worked very hard in the last 24 months and demonstrated strong continued commitment to finalising the Mining Code. "I believe the finish line is now within sight and we look forward to the consolidated regulatory text at the next meeting in November."

### **Calls for transparency**

Meanwhile, seven non-governmental organisations, Pacific Network on Globalisation, are calling for increased media access at ISA meetings. In a letter, the NGOs urged the ISA to ensure it accredited the media to attend its meetings alongside removing a clause that stops media criticising the authority or its member states. Tau said the rules were continuously changing for media accreditation. "What aspects of the proceedings that journalists are able to observe and cover and which are not, that's why we are calling for the transparency of the secretariat," he said.

### **Seabed Mining - no greenlight**

Radio New Zealand, 31 July 2023

Greenpeace says pressure to stop deep-sea mining before it starts is mounting, with a growing list of countries calling for a pause. It comes after the UN organisation in charge of international deep-sea mining rules did not give companies the green light to mine, after finishing its meeting on Friday in Jamaica. A Greenpeace spokesperson said more than 20 countries are now calling for at least some sort of mining pause. Greenpeace campaigner James Hita said the world is fighting back against deep sea mining. He said it was clear over the course of the meeting that the practice was not only reckless, but politically toxic. However, Hita said the meeting failed to remove a clause that could allow mining to start before regulations are completed.

### **International talks end without go-ahead for deep-sea mining**

*Last-minute agreement reached at ISA meeting in Jamaica to discuss moratorium at next year's talks.* The Guardian, 29 July 2023



A deep-sea mining robot during a test operation in the Pacific Ocean. Photograph: GSR/Reuters

An international meeting in [Jamaica](#) to negotiate rules over deep-sea mining has ended with no green light to start industrial-scale mining and with an 11th-hour agreement to hold formal discussions next year on the protection of the marine environment. The agreement ended intense week-long negotiations at the International Seabed Authority (ISA), an intergovernmental body based in Kingston that regulates sea-bed extraction, over a proposal spearheaded by Chile, France and Costa Rica and backed by a dozen countries to discuss a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining to ensure the protection of the marine environment. China, which is keen to see mining go ahead, had blocked the motion for a discussion all week, but finally agreed to allow it on the agenda in 2024.

Gina Guillén Grillo, Costa Rica's representative to the ISA, said it was "very disappointing that one country by themselves can kidnap the assembly", where all member states have a voice, and "hoped the objecting country will honour their word" to allow discussion next year. "We believe the protection of the marine environment is such a huge part of our obligation as member states," she said. Environmentalists welcomed the compromise as an "open door" to a proper discussion by the ISA assembly, which comprises 168 member states and the EU, on whether mining should go ahead at all. Overall, they said, "important strides forward" had been made towards the protection of the marine environment. It was a crucial, three-week-long meeting of the ISA, a UN-affiliated body, which was under pressure to finalise rules governing mining by this month.

The ISA's 36-member council, the body that oversees rules and regulations, decided it needed more time to finalise rules. Last week, in a decision that effectively delayed the start of any mining operations, it said it would work "with a view" to adopting regulations in 2025. The council did not decide how to consider any application requests that might arrive in the meantime, however, prompting criticism that a legal loophole remained open. In March, the council said exploitation should not be agreed until a mining code was agreed. In a speech on Wednesday, the French secretary of state for seas, Hervé Berville, reinforced France's call for a ban on deep-sea mining: "We cannot and must not embark on a new industrial activity when we are not able to fully measure its consequences and therefore risk irreversible damage to our marine ecosystems."

[More than 20 countries](#) in the assembly have called for a pause or ban. They argue that not enough is known about mining's impact on deep-sea ecosystems to proceed. Brazil has called for a pause of 10 years, and several other countries have resisted. Earlier this week, Nauru's president, Russ Kun, expressed disappointment that the ISA had not yet adopted regulations. He told delegates: "We have a window of opportunity to support the development of a sector that Nauru considers has the potential to help accelerate our energy transition to combat climate change." Advocates for deep-sea mining say it is needed to meet the increasing demand for metals such as cobalt and nickel that are used in batteries powering the green transition from fossil fuels.

Louisa Casson, the global project leader for Greenpeace's campaign to stop deep-sea mining, said: "These last three weeks have seen important strides forward for ocean protection. Industry really thought this was the moment when mining would go ahead." Sofia Tsenikli, of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, said: "What is clear is that the growing opposition to deep-sea mining has burst the ISA bubble, and pro-mining interests now know business as usual is over. "The need to protect the ocean from the impacts of mining took centre stage inside and outside of the ISA during these weeks, despite efforts to silence the debate." Over the past month, [the UN high commissioner for human rights](#), 37 global financial institutions, [seafood groups](#), scientists and Indigenous groups have called for a halt to deep-sea mining.

## Government, miner meet on Wafi-Golpu

National, 28 July 2023

REPRESENTATIVES of the Government and Harmony Gold mining company met on Wednesday to continue discussions on permitting the Wafi-Golpu mining development project. Harmony Gold chairman Patrice Motsepe thanked the Government for its supporting the signing of the Wafi-Golpu framework and memorandum of understanding (MoU) in April. The MoU supports the Government and Harmony Gold's intent to proceed with the tier-one project, which is subject to the finalisation of the permitting process and approvals by developer partners Harmony Gold and Newcrest Mining Ltd. They were updated on the progress of discussions with the Government and the relevant stakeholders to develop the detailed agreements further in support of a Special Mining Lease (SML) grant.

Motsepe said: "Harmony, through its subsidiary companies, owns the Hidden Valley Mine and will be a significant partner with the State and Newcrest in the Wafi-Golpu Project development. "Harmony is proud of the contribution it has made to Morobe through the creation of jobs, business development opportunities and regional infrastructure." Harmony's chief executive officer Peter Steenkamp added: "We look forward to the finalisation of the various agreements that will underpin the project's SML grant and participating in the subsequent project development. We look forward to concluding the permitting of the Wafi-Golpu project, enabling us to continue creating shared value for all our stakeholders in PNG. "Harmony has also helped develop training of about 76 per cent nationals, which is continuing to increase through our superintendent and leadership development programmes."

## Mine conducts local census

National, 28 July 2023



A Ok Tedi Mining Ltd staff updating census figures in Kautru village, Suki Fly Gogo, Western recently. - Picture supplied

OK Tedi Mining Ltd (OTML) continues to engage with the local communities in Western to ensure the people are aware of the mine's operations. OTML recently concluded two programmes significant to its commitment to engage with the communities in the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) regions. Superintendent, sustainability planning and CMCA, Michael Miise said these programmes included the communications and consultation patrol (CC patrol) and the CMCA census update covering the nine CMCA regions from the North Fly to the South Fly. "Both programmes are key activities under the CMCA Agreement, which gives OTML the communities'

informed consent and social licence to operate,” he said. “Collaborating with our stakeholders to run the programmes is paramount to the success of these initiatives. “By bringing all stakeholders together, we create a conducive environment for open dialogue and the opportunity to address issues directly in the villages.

“This effort allows us to address concerns, answer questions, and strengthen our relationships with the communities that have placed their trust in us and gave us the social licence to operate through the CMCA. “These programmes serve as tangible evidence of our commitment to honouring our agreement with the CMCA communities and fostering positive relationships with the communities we serve. “The support and cooperation we have received from the communities thus far has been positive,” Miise added. The CC patrol and census update began on April 28 and ended on July 12, covering the CMCA regions in the following order: Kiwaba, Dudi, Manawete, Suki Fly Gogo and Middle Fly. The Lower Ok Tedi, North Ok Tedi, Highway were done earlier while the mine villages (mine lease area) were conducted after. “A total of 158 villages have been visited and an updated population figure of nearly 160,000 has been recorded,” Miise said.

### **Porgera mine set to resume operations**

National, 27 July 2023



Enga Governor Sir Peter Ipatas (fifth from left), Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala and Prime Minister James Marape during the security forum in Palam, Porgera, Enga, last week.

About K26.6 billion was pumped into the national economy since the Porgera mine opened in 1990. On average, the mine contributed about 40 per cent to the national economy, before its licence expired in 2019. Business reporter DANIEL EALEDONA looks at what had been happening since the closure of Porgera to today.

IT has been four years since Porgera stopped operations. According to Barrick Niugini Limited (BNL), the major operator of the Porgera gold mine, and its joint venture partner Zijin Mining Ltd, more than K4 billion had been paid in tax and excise revenue. According to Prime Minister James Marape, the Government’s decision to delay the extension of BNL’s special mining lease (SML) was to secure the best investment opportunities from the mine. Marape repeated his government’s “take back PNG” strategy he announced when he took office in 2019. The strategy focused on increasing the benefits from mining projects for the country.

This is through equity paid by the mine developers to the Government, and royalties for landowners and the provincial governments. Mine developers had to consider these factors when negotiating on proposed mining projects in the country. It has been four years of negotiation. All infrastructure and key development and law and order issues were also to be addressed by the Government. According

to a report published by the Institute of National Affairs, the Government in 1996 purchased an additional 15 per cent stake to bring its equity to 25 per cent. Five per cent of this equity was through statutory requirements allocated to the Enga province and SML landowners.



Locals during the security forum in Paiam, Pongera, Enga, last week. – Pictures courtesy of MRA

The remaining 20 per cent was for government expenditure. On the cost of restarting the mine, Marape said the Government would contribute 36 per cent of the start-up, while Barrick would contribute 49 per cent. The remaining 15 per cent was for the Enga government and landowners. Barrick Corporation chief executive officer and president Mark Bristow had estimated that the reopening Pongera would cost about K1 billion. Marape thanked Barrick for taking charge of the care and maintenance of the mine since the mining ceased. According to Barrick and the Government, the New Pongera mine would be 51 per cent owned by PNG shareholders – the Government, Enga and landowner groups. On the economic benefits, PNG shareholders will share 53 per cent, while BNL gets 47 per cent.

### PORGERA MINE TIMELINE OF EVENTS

**2019**

June 13: Government welcomes decision to renew the Pongera gold mine permit with BNL.

June 28: Prime Minister James Marape says Government wants a better benefits for landowners and negotiations with Barrick Haugst Limited (BNL) for increased state and provincial equity.

Aug 5: National Court rules for Pongera to continue operations until its application to extend its SML Special Mining Lease was being considered by the Government.

Aug 16: Pongera SML expires. National Executive Council (NEC) and stakeholders reviewing BNL's SML application submission.

Sept 5: National Road Network Strategy launched as BNL commits itself through the tax credit scheme in developing road infrastructure in Pongera and Enga.

Oct 11: Marape announces Fanga Fanga caucus leader signals government's intention to have better negotiated benefits from mining development projects in the country.

Nov 5: Tribal conflict and law and order issues increase in Pongera.

Nov 16: Government announces it will fight hard for bigger returns for landowners (LOs) and the State from natural resources.

Dec 6: Marape tells parliament that decisions on Pongera's SML renewal will be made by the NEC whether to renew BNL's licence, terminated or new arrangements through negotiations.

**2020**

benefits begin, to be included on the renegotiated New Pongera mine agreement.

May 1: Government assures about 3,600 BNL employees they will not lose their jobs.

June 2: Former prime minister Peter O'Neill calls the Government out on its slowness in renewing BNL's mining lease, affecting employment and law and order issues in Pongera.

July 17: Marape says the LOs, provincial government and the State need to have more benefits from negotiations.

Aug 31: Government rejects BNL SML extension, gave BNL the option to enter into negotiation for a reviewed SML (One year since BNL SML application was given to MRA for review by NEC and stakeholder).

Sept 5: Government announced that Kumul Minerals Holdings Ltd (KMHL) has financial and technical capacities to operate Pongera as a 100 per cent PNG-owned mine.

Sept 2: Marape says BNL have an opportunity to review their mining application based on favoured KMHL application.

Sept 5: Global gold price increase, pressure for negotiations for the mines reopening are seen as the government's opportunity to present its terms and conditions for BNL to consider.

Sept 18: Government announces negotiation for Pongera would close at the end of the year.

Sept 29: O'Neill warns Marape on destroying foreign investor confidence with what he labelled foray nationalising Pongera assets. Tells Marape to learn from him on the

**2021**

process of nationalising a mine, and referencing his government's achievement of the 100 per cent ownership of Ok Tedi Milling Ltd.

Oct 15: Barrick Corporation president Mark Bristow visits PNG to discuss with Government, LO and the State Negotiating Team (SNT) on ways BNL can help with investment opportunities.

Nov 16: Opposition meet in Vanimo, not happy with government's handing of new Pongera deal.

Nov 18: Questions raised on Marape's leadership with rumours of Barrick influencing local politics in the country.

Dec 11: Senior politician Patrick Puaheh blames Marape for slump in the country's economy because of Pongera's closure.

Feb: Roads in the Pongera continue to deteriorate.

April: Government announces benefit sharing of Pongera would be 51 per cent PNG stakeholders and 49 per cent for Barrick and partners.

June 2: Marape presents framework agreement plan for Pongera reopening.

July 6: Economic development forum for Pongera and the State begin.

Sept: Opposition Leader Belden Namahilams Government for still not opening Pongera.

Sept 14: Marape determined to

**2022**

have Pongera opened on PNG's Independence Day – Sep 16, 2021.

Sep 21: Former BSP CEO Robin Fleming in an economic update supports Pongera reopening and that talks needed to be done properly on the investment opportunities the mine brings.

Oct 4: Marape and SNT meet with Bristow in the United States to push negotiations for Pongera.

Oct 12: Bristow and Marape meet in Port Moresby to discuss Pongera.

Oct 18: Government announce April 2022 as expected reopening month.

Oct 19: SNT head Isaac Lupari advises government to review the mine reopening negotiations. Sighting legality issues, tax liabilities and SML licensing as reasons for renegotiation.

Oct 20: Fleming highlights the importance of Pongera to the general economy of businesses in Lae, Mt Hagen and Enga.

Feb 6: Mineral Resource Enga (MRE) sign Pongera Project Continuation Agreement (PPCA).

April 11: Marape said Pongera

**2023**

Jun 20: BNL and Internal Revenue Commission settled all disputes and issues relating to old Pongera tax matters in the interest of Pongera reopening.

Jul 20: Security Forum takes place in Paiam, Enga.

Jul 20: Security forum held in Paiam town, Pongera with LOs and people. Mining Minister announce the mine's development forum dates.

Jul 21: Permitting and regulatory process complete Pongera ready for reopening.

Aug 1: Pongera development forum to be held in Tari, Hela.

Aug 7: Pongera mine development forum for the state negotiating team, landowners and stakeholders to be held in Wabag town, Enga.

Aug 31: Pongera mine permitting process expected to be complete. Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala wants to issue SML.

Sept 16: Expected date for the reopening of the Pongera gold mine.

Oct 15: Dec – Marape expects the first revenues from the renegotiated 53 per cent equity for the country from first gold productions of the new Pongera mine.

## PM urges Enga ministers to stop fighting ahead of mine reopening National, 26 July 2023

PRIME Minister James Marape has appealed to the people of Pongera Valley in Enga to stop fighting so that the Pongera mine can restart operations. Marape, flanked by Mining Minister Sir

Ano Pala, Enga Governor Sir Peter Ipatas and Porgera MP Paiela Maso Karipe, addressed the people of Porgera on Thursday, during the security forum in Paiam town. He explained that the mine was expected to resume operations around September or October, and the Government would ensure lawlessness in the valley was addressed first. Marape warned law-breakers that the Government would come down hard on them. He said the Police Commissioner David Manning had appointed Chief Insp Martin Kelly as the Porgera station commander to oversee policing in the valley. The Government would provide the Porgera police with resources, and also ensure that the courts resume sittings to ensure offenders are dealt with accordingly.

The security forum was organised by the Mineral Resources Authority to demonstrate the Government's commitment in addressing law and order issues in the valley. The forum was a precursor to the MRA's regulatory and statutory license permitting processes, following the lodgment of the application for the Special Mining Lease (SML) for the mine by the New Porgera Limited. The statutory processes are the warden's hearing and the development forum which be held on Aug 1 in Tari. The development forum is scheduled for August 7 in Wabag. The security forum was attended by the Porgera Land Owners Association executives, SML clan agents, Lease for Mining Purpose landowners and Riverine/mine impacted communities from Western and West Sepik. Representatives of these landowner groups agreed to address the current law and order issues in the valley.

### **Statutory tasks prioritised for mine reopening**

National, 26 July 2023

THERE are important statutory activities that must be undertaken by the Mineral Resource Authority (MRA) to ensure the reopening of the Porgera mine, says Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala. Sir Ano said the two statutory activities were the mining warden's hearing, which was held at Paiam Oval in Porgera on Thursday, and the technical assessment on the proposal for development expected to take place in Tari on Aug 1. The mining development forum will be held on Aug 7 in Wabag town. The signing of the special mining lease 13 (SML 13) for the Porgera mining project is expected at the end of August. Sir Ano acknowledged the Government for securing the 51 per cent stake in the project. However, he said the 51 per cent needed to be translated into benefits. He added that to realise the benefits, all stakeholders must address law and order issues and restore peace in the valley. "Without peace, we can't access gold in the ground," he said. The announcement of the date and the venue for the forum is consistent with the Mining Act, which requires the Mining Minister to make an announcement to trigger the benefits-sharing negotiation process leading to the signing of the memorandum of agreements.

### **K282.9m contract for K92 Mine's stage three expansion**

Post Courier, 26 July 2023

K92 Mining Inc has announced that their Board of Directors have authorised the company's award of the engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning (EPC) Lump Sum Contract for the 1.2 million-tonnes-per-annum (mtpa) Stage 3 Expansion Process Plant. The contract was awarded to GR Engineering Services Limited (GRES) following a tender process. The EPC Lump Sum Contract award amount is US\$81 million (about K282.89 million) and is fixed price/lump sum, significantly de-risking potential cost increases to K92. In addition to the award of the contract, all process plant long-lead item contracts have already been awarded on a fixed price (excluding freight), to CITIC HIC Australia Pty Ltd for the SAG and ball mills, Jord International Pty Ltd for the filter press and Metso Outotec Australia Limited for the tank flotation cells, flash flotation cells and high-rate thickeners.

Following the award of the EPC Lump Sum Contract and the placement of orders for the long lead items, the forecast cost of the 1.2 mtpa Stage three Process Plant is within 10 per cent of the capital cost outlined in the Kainantu Integrated Development Plan (IDP) Definitive Feasibility and Preliminary Economic Assessment cases (see September 12, 2022 press release – K92 Mining Inc Announces Robust Kainantu Gold Mine Integrated Development Plan), and importantly approximately 94 per cent of the forecast capital cost has been fixed. John Lewins, K92 chief executive officer and director, said: “The award of the EPC contract for the 1.2 mtpa Stage 3 Expansion Process Plant is a major milestone and de-risking event for the company.

“Combined with the long-lead items, the company has awarded approximately 94 per cent of the process plant capital cost. “Our largest growth capital item for the expansion, forecasted to represent over half of the growth capital, on a fixed price basis, significantly mitigating potential capital cost increases. “Importantly, the forecasted cost of the process plant has tracked well with the Integrated Development Plan and the mitigation of the Process Plant’s capital inflation risk strengthens our position to self-fund the Stage 3 Expansion. “We are also very pleased to be working with GRES. “They are a world-class engineering and contracting firm. “GRES brings not only significant expertise in the design and construction of process plants but also extensive experience in Papua New Guinea.”

### **Development plan seen as key**

National, 26 July 2023

THE Wafi-Golpu project developers and the Government must agree on a development plan before the development forum can be held, according to Morobe Governor Luther Wenge. Wenge said that to date, both parties had only been exchanging ideas and submissions. “They say after a month’s time, the State and the developers should come to an agreement,” Wenge said. “Then, they will advise us and together we can call the long-awaited Wafi-Golpu development forum to be held in Lae.” Prime Minister James Marape during his trip to Lae in May said the development forum should be held towards the end of June and early July. Wenge said the K18 billion gold-copper project, although eagerly anticipated by Morobe, must follow all processes carefully before it starts.

He welcomed the framework memorandum of understanding signed in April by the Government and the project partners Harmony Gold Mining Ltd and Newcrest Mining Ltd. The Mining Act 1992 states that a development forum shall be convened by the (mining) minister before the granting of any special mining lease (SML) to consider the views of those persons whom the minister believes will be affected by the granting of that SML. The Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) calls for fair representation of views from the SML applicant, the holders of the land subject to the applied SML and other proposed tenements, the Government and the provincial government. Marape said the project developer confirmed an 18-month period to conclude its Final Investment Decision (FID) which should be before 2025. The actual construction phase of the project is expected to start in the next five to six years. The first gold should be produced by 2030.

### **Communities to 'stop the killings'**

Radio New Zealand on 24 July 2023

The Papua New Guinea government is calling for local communities in Porgera, Enga Province, to end the violence as it works to reopen the Porgera Gold Mine by September. In April, tribal violence in Porgera led to the closure of schools and businesses, raising concerns about the safety of people and the goldmine. As part of efforts to address the issues on the ground and restart the goldmine a security forum has been held in Piam town in Porgera last week. The Prime Minister's

Office said leaders and security forces appealed to the local warring tribes to end the fighting because of its effects on the mine, businesses and the community. The government said it is working day and night to ensure the goldmine - closed for four years - is reopened in September so benefits could flow to the people. Prime Minister James Marape made a direct appeal to the people of Porgera and the surrounding communities to stop fighting and do away with the guns and tap into spin off benefits from the mine.



Porgera gold mine. Photo: [Richard Farbelini at English Wikipedia / Public domain](#)

"Let your children live in peace and get the benefits from the mine and stop the killings," he said. He also appealed to all the affected communities, landowners, mine licence areas to bring their issues and grievances and what benefits they would like to get at the new Porgera Mine Development Forum in Wabag next month. "We want to hear from you. We want to know what you want and how we can share the benefits from our 51 percent stake in the New Porgera Mine," Marapa said. The national government has also announced a total of 700 million kina for a seven-year infrastructure development grant, which is to also address outstanding issues like resettling of people away from the mine area. Marape said the first gold and revenue from the new Porgera Mine was anticipated by October this year or thereafter. The national government will issue or sign the Mining Licence by the end of August this year following the Mine Development Forum.

### **Govt targets Independence for Porgera Mine reopening –** Post Courier, 21 July 2023

Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala says Mining License for the New Porgera Mine will be issued by the end of August, with plans to reopen the mine on Independence Day. "The Marape-Rosso government wants to have the Porgera Mine reopened by the 16th of September this year," Sir Ano said at Paiam township during a security forum to restore peace and normalcy and reopen the mine. He said before the Mining Department issues the mining license, there must be peace and normalcy in the Porgera Valley. He said the second requirement is the wardens hearing and the Porgera Mine Development Forum to start soon. The first hearing will be in Paiam township on July 31 and the development forum will be held in Wabag in early August 2023. The Mining Minister said the National Government through the Department of Mining will sign off on the mining license by August 30, 2023.

However, he appealed to the people and locals to stop the fighting and let the development forum iron out all outstanding issues and get the benefits the mine will bring. Prime Minister James

Marape thanked the Minister and his department for opening the Porgera Mine Development Forum. The mine was closed for almost three years since the government refused to renew Barrick Niugini Limited's (BNL) mining lease. Barrick Gold Corporation president and chief executive officer Mark Bristow said recently that there are a number of important steps that must occur before the mine is reopened. He said he is hopeful that these steps can be completed quickly in months.

### **Porgera looks forward to forum**

By PETER ESILA, National, 20 July 2023

THE business community in Porgera is looking forward to the security forum scheduled for today in Paiam today as the reopening of the gold mine approaches, says a representative. Porgera chamber of commerce and industry president Nickson Pakea said: "Though the mine is set to open in September, Prime Minister James Marape's coming is paramount. "We want banking services, schools and the hospital to resume normal operations." "We look forward to receiving the Prime Minister and his delegation. "We see light at the end of the tunnel. "Before the mining warden hearing and development forum, the safety and security of the host community including businesses is very important. "There is chaos in the valley, a breakdown in law and order.

"We want the Government enforcement in terms of restoration, recall of public servants who left in fear of the tribal fight. "The close of the Porgera mine since 2019 was a contributing factor on this ongoing lawlessness. "The PM coming to Porgera to see physically for himself on the chaotic condition here and assurance to open the mine is a great relief to us." The Government's state negotiating team, stakeholders and landowners (LOs) will be having discussions today at a security forum in Paiam in Enga. The forum is aimed at addressing law and order issues in the Porgera mine area. The LOs warden hearing is also expected to take place before the month's end and this hearing would see the announcement of Porgera benefit distributions been made.

### **PNG academic pleads for Porgera money not to be wasted**

Radio New Zealand on 20 July 2023



Aerial view of the Porgera gold mine. Photo: Zijin Mining

A Papua New Guinea academic wants structures to be put in place to ensure returns from the soon to reopen Porgera goldmine in PNG are not wasted. The mine has been shut down for three years as

the government and parent company, Barrick Gold, worked through a new lease. However, it is now set to re-open in September this year. Andrew Anton Mako, who grew up in Porgera in the early years of the mine and won a mine-funded scholarship to study at the University of PNG, said much of the earlier income went on consumption. He has written about what he calls the [blessings and the curse](#) the mine brought to what was a small district of about 4,000 and which now has more than 70,000 residents. Parent company, Canadian company Barrick Gold, along with its partner Zijin Mining of China, has this week committed to meeting the government's opening date of 16 September. Mako hopes that the new leases, agreed back in April, and which are much more beneficial for the landowners, will be used smartly and not wasted on consumption spending.

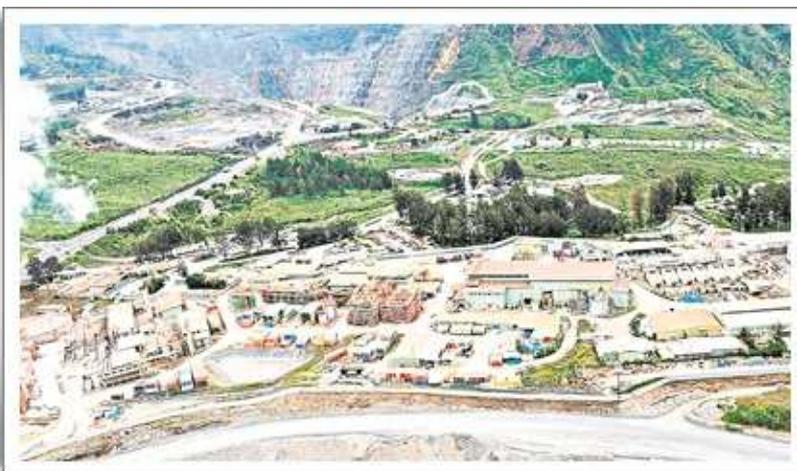
"In the past it was only 2.5 percent of the mine equity stake," he said. "Now the landowners have been given ten percent, free carry, by the government. So, it will be a lot of money. It is estimated around 25 million kina. That's a lot of money for the next 20 years. "So even though the proceeds will increase, the main issue is in the governance, the use of that money, whether it will be used productively to improve the lives of the people or whether it will be used mostly on consumption," he said. Mako said there must also be thought given to what happens when the mine stops producing. "The mine is estimated to last only 20 years when it resumes and after that there won't be anything to go by, if the money is just spent on consumption," he said. "So, what I was proposing was to set up a long-term fund that will cater for socio-economic development post the gold mine." He said this would require improved governance while the district and regional governments must be strengthened.

### **Commitment to open**

The Canadian multinational, Barrick Gold, said it would strive to reach the government's call for the mine to reopen on 16 September this year. Under the new lease arrangement, Barrick and Zijin will take a minority shareholding, with the government holding 53 percent. Prime Minister Jame Marape said in a statement that he met this week with Barrick chief executive Mark Bristow to discuss recent progress being made. He welcomed Bristow's statement that Barrick was committed to PNG "for the long haul" and his pledge that Barrick Niugini Limited would do everything under its control to meet the reopening date, and to which both parties are now working diligently toward. The prime minister said with the reopening imminent, a development conference will shortly be held. He said both parties are committed to fixing the legacy issues such as proper resettlement, increase land rates and compensation consistent to law, education and health developments, infrastructure developments, and a better law and order environment.

### **Tax issues resolved, mine reopening soon**

By DANIEL EALEDONA, National, 20 July 2023



A view of Porgera Mine in Enga, operated by Barrick Niugini Limited. – Nationalfilepic

THE Internal Revenue Commission (IRC) has addressed the tax issue with Barrick Niugini Ltd (BNL) and is looking forward to the re-opening of the Porgera mine, says commissioner-general Sam Koim. Koim told *The National* yesterday that Barrick had paid its tax dividends based on the settlement agreed to with the Government. “It’s good for the economy and the country that Porgera opens sooner rather than later,” Koim said. The tax issue BNL had with IRC, which had to be sorted out before the reopening of the mine which closed down in 2020, was to do with issues on taxed revenues during the mine’s operations before its closure. Mining resource developers tax contributions paid to the Government are important and highlighted in Porgera’s Special Mining Lease. Barrick Corporation, the major shareholder of the BNL, and its Porgera joint venture partner Zijin Mining, had paid more than K4 billion in taxes since the mine started in 1990.

According to the joint venture, it had paid more than K368 million in taxes in 2019 before the closure of the mine. The taxes include the employee and income tax, customs duties, production levies, fuel and excise taxes and company income tax. “Once the mine opens, the IRC look forward to collecting tax – substantial amounts of salary and wages tax have not been collected from Porgera since the mine shutdown,” Koim said. He said spin-off benefits from the mine, in terms of new investment and business opportunities, would create more avenues for the IRC to collect additional government revenue. The revenues remitted to IRC are transferred to the Government’s expenditure budget to meet development and infrastructure needs.

### **Barrick updates PM on mine re-opening**

Post Courier, 19 July 2023



President and Chief Executive Officer of Barrick Gold Corporation, Mark Bristow met with Prime Minister James Marape to discuss recent progress and the status of the matters remaining to be completed in anticipation of the reopening of Porgera Mine on Monday. Mr Marape welcomed Mr Bristow’s statement that Barrick was committed to PNG “for the long haul” and his pledge that Barrick Niugini Limited, for its part, would do everything under its control to meet the September 16 reopening date that the Prime Minister had set as target, and to which both parties are now working diligently toward. A development forum preceding the reopening is imminent within the next several weeks to ensure all landowners and provincial governments are met to iron out, amongst other things, their benefit distributions.

The Government has committed an additional K900 million on top of major gains from project benefits that averages to PNG beneficiaries getting 53 per cent to Barrick Gold getting 47 per cent in New Porgera. Both parties committed to fix legacy issues such as proper resettlement, increase land rates and compensation consistent to law, education and health developments, infrastructure developments, and a better law and order environment in Porgera and all project area footprint, including riverine and other project support areas. To meet the September target, both parties committed to attend to all these matters at hand. The resource in Porgera can be easily harvested at over 500,000 ounces a year, capable of bringing millions of dollars back into the country at the high gold prices at present.

### **Deep-sea mining threatens tuna fisheries - study**

Caleb Fotheringham, RNZ Pacific Journalist, Radio New Zealand, 13 June 2023



Abstract abyss under sea background. coral reef underwater with sun ray. 3D rendering image. Photo: Copyright: [isam-puntarat](#)

Seafood organisations are calling for a pause on deep-sea mining after a new study claims the two industries could be in conflict as tuna migrates East due to climate change. The seafood groups - including the Global Tuna Alliance, whose industry partners account to roughly a third of the global tuna trade - said deep-sea mining "poses a threat to the ocean and its inhabiting life". The announcement comes as the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the UN agency that is responsible for regulating the world's ocean floor, meets in Jamaica, where member countries are expected to advance negotiations for mining regulations. The letter, that included six other organisations, said they "strongly recommend a pause on deep-sea mining until there is a clear understanding of the impacts the industry may have on the marine environment, its living resources, and those dependent on them".

"We see it as mandatory that strong, scientifically-grounded regulations are in place before any exploitation contracts are granted by the International Seabed Authority." The study published in Nature npj Ocean Sustainability said tuna fisheries and deep-sea mining could increasingly overlap as more tuna moves into the Clarion-Clipperton Zone of the Pacific Ocean - a high interest area for deep-sea mining companies. According to the study, the total bio-mass for bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin tuna in the Pacific's Clarion-Clipperton Zone is predicted to increase between 10 to 31 per cent by mid-century as global temperatures increase. Lead author Diva Amon said plumes created by the mining could impact the behaviour of tuna. "If deep-sea mining is happening in that area, where they are going for climate refuge may actually be very inhospitable to them," Amon said. "This could be deeply problematic for management of the high seas in the future, and also potentially have implications for economies, wellbeing's, livelihoods and of course biodiversity." Amon said plumes might cause tuna to migrate away from the area as well as cause illness.

She said the noise of the mining could also have a physiological and behavioural impact on tuna and toxic metals could enter the seafood supply. "This plume potentially could contain metals, some of which could be toxic and that could actually become incorporated into the deep-sea food web," she said. "Even if there are only low risks from this accumulation it could still have a negative consumer reaction. "So, there are potentially be implications to economies and for Pacific small island developing states or coastal Pacific states that fish in the area." Amon added there could be physical conflict as both fishing and deep-sea mining vessels complete in the same area. The seafood organisations have joined the call for a moratorium alongside several countries in the recent weeks, including Canada, Sweden, Ireland and Switzerland.

### **Pacific – tuna**

Radio New Zealand, 12 July 2023

Seafood industry groups are calling for a pause on deep-sea mining until there is a clear understanding of the impacts it would have on the marine environment. The announcement comes as the International Seabed Authority meets in Jamaica, where member countries are expected to design and implement deep-sea mining regulations. The seafood groups - including the Global Tuna Alliance, whose industry partners account for roughly 30 per cent of the global tuna trade - say deep sea mining poses a threat to the oceans and its marine life. In a letter, the organisations say sediment plumes could impact the health of fish populations, and toxic metals could be consumed by nearby seafood species.

### **Internationale Meeresbodenbehörde tagt: Frist für Regelung zum Rohstoffabbau am Meeresboden abgelaufen**

*Die Internationale Meeresbodenbehörde hat es versäumt, ein Gesetz für den Tiefseebergbau zu erlassen. Theoretisch könnte die Behörde nun Abbaulizenzen ohne eine Grundlage erteilen. NGOs und Wissenschaftler sind besorgt.*

Spiegel, 10.07.2023, 17.51 Uhr



Aktivisten der Umweltorganisation Greenpeace demonstrieren am 31. März 2023 vor dem Sitz der Internationalen Meeresbodenbehörde (ISA) auf Jamaika gegen den Tiefseebergbau; Foto: Nick Kaiser / dpa

Noch fehlen ausreichende wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse zu den Folgen des Tiefseebergbaus und überhaupt ein Regelwerk für die Ausbeutung von Rohstoffen am Meeresboden – und doch könnten bald die ersten Genehmigungen dafür erteilt werden. Auf ihrer Jahrestagung in [Jamaika](#) beschäftigt sich die Internationale Meeresbodenbehörde (ISA) ab Montag mit den Bodenschätzen am Meeresgrund und steht dabei mächtig unter Zeitdruck.

Die Meeresbodenbehörde, gegründet im Zuge des Seerechtsübereinkommens der [Uno](#) aus den Achtzigerjahren, verwaltet das »Gemeinsame Erbe der Menschheit« und ist verantwortlich für den Schutz des Meeresbodens in internationalen Gewässern, also solchen, die nicht unter nationaler Verwaltung stehen. Darunter fällt auch der Umgang mit begehrten Rohstoffen wie Nickel, Kobalt oder Kupfer. Es geht um Manganknollen, kobalthaltige Krusten und sogenannte polymetallische Sulfide – vor dem Hintergrund einer Technologiebranche, die immer mehr dieser Rohstoffe benötigt.

Derzeit gibt die Behörde lediglich Lizenzen für Erkundungstouren aus. Seit rund zehn Jahren versucht sie aber, ein Regelwerk zum Tiefseebergbau in Gewässern auf die Beine zu stellen, die nicht in die nationale Zuständigkeit einzelner Küstenstaaten fallen. Bislang gibt es diesen sogenannten Mining Code nicht.

### **Behörde könnte ohne festes Regelwerk Tiefseebergbauprojekte genehmigen**

Im Juli 2021 löste dann der Inselstaat [Nauru](#) eine Klausel nach dem Seerechtsabkommen aus, wonach binnen zwei Jahren ein klares Regelwerk stehen muss, wenn ein Land Tiefseebergbau betreiben will. Nauru will dafür mit einer Tochterfirma der kanadischen Metals Company kooperieren. Die Frist lief am Sonntag ab.

Die ISA müsste sich nun ohne Regelwerk mit einem konkreten Antrag auf eine Lizenz zum Abbau befassen und könnte dafür auch grünes Licht geben. Es sei daher nun »entscheidend, dass die nötigen Regeln zum Schutz unserer Meere umgesetzt werden«, sagt Emma Wilson von der Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, einem Zusammenschluss von Organisationen zum Meeresschutz. Die ISA befinde sich in der wichtigsten Entscheidungsphase seit Beginn ihrer Existenz.

Die Behörden auf Nauru haben zwar versichert, nicht unmittelbar mit der Ausbeutung zu beginnen, sollte die Behörde auch ohne festes Regelwerk ein konkretes Tiefseebergbauprojekt zulassen. Doch andere Unternehmen, die ähnliche Begehren von Staaten unterstützten, könnten dem Beispiel folgen und das rechtliche Vakuum ausnutzen, befürchten Experten.

### **WWF fordert Moratorium**

Pradeep Singh vom Potsdamer Forschungsinstitut für Nachhaltigkeit hält es für einen Fehler, Lizenzen zu vergeben, während die ISA noch über ein Regelwerk verhandelt. Zugleich zeigte er sich wenig besorgt, dass dies passiere. Im März hatten die 36 zum Rat der ISA gehörenden Vertragsstaaten erklärt, dass keine kommerzielle Ausbeutung stattfinden dürfe, solange kein Mining Code stehe. Der Rat ist das Entscheidungsorgan der ISA, [Deutschland](#) ist Mitglied. Er tagt nun im jamaikanischen Kingston.

Zusätzlich befasst sich Ende Juli erstmals die Versammlung der ISA, die alle 167 Vertragsstaaten umfasst, auf Antrag von [Chile](#), [Frankreich](#), [Palau](#) und [Vanuatu](#) mit der Frage nach einer vorsorglichen Pause des kommerziellen Tiefseebergbaus. Ziel sei es, »das Problem auf den Tisch zu packen und eine Debatte anzustoßen, die es bisher nicht gegeben hat«, erklärt der französische Meeresstaatssekretär Hervé Berville. Das sei vor dem Hintergrund des Klimaschutzes auch eine »Frage der Glaubwürdigkeit«.

NGOs und Wissenschaftler warnen davor, dass der Tiefseebergbau Lebensräume und Arten zerstören kann, die womöglich noch unbekannt, für Ökosysteme aber wichtig sind. Sie warnen auch davor, dass der dadurch entstehende Lärm die Kommunikation von Tieren stören könnte, etwa von Walen. Unter anderem der WWF fordert ein Moratorium, bis klar ist, dass die Aktivitäten keine Schäden an der Meeresumwelt anrichten. Demnach sprachen sich bereits 16 Länder für ein weltweites Moratorium oder einen Stopp des Tiefseebergbaus aus, darunter Deutschland. Unterstützt werden sie von über 700 Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern.

## Ok Tedi praised for K43mil input

National, 10 July 2023

Agriculture Minister Aiye Tambua has praised Ok Tedi Mining Limited for investing about K43 million in an agricultural project. Tambua said this when launching a vanilla project funded by Ok Tedi Mining Ltd in Kiunga, Western, recently. “It’s a big agricultural project. In PNG, no mine or oil and gas company, has invested in an agriculture project,” he said. “It’s the first time so we must appreciate and thank Ok Tedi. “These oil and gas companies concentrate their investments in the law and order sector. “In Enga and Hela, these companies invest K100 million to engage soldiers and police personnel. “For law and order alone, I think we got it all wrong. “Why are we are not investing this kind of money in agriculture? “Instead, we are putting money to solve law and order issues. “There is no investment in agriculture, forcing people to cause law and order problems because they are hungry and there is no food.

“Just imagine if such money is pumped into agricultural projects. Agriculture is the future of this country,” Tambua added. “Agriculture will look after us and give us independence not oil, gas, or minerals. “Your rubber in Western gave us independence, copra plantations in Madang, Manus, Bougainville, East New Britain and New Ireland gave us independence, cocoa plantations in ENBP and Bougainville gave us independence. “So on behalf of the Government, I thank Ok Tedi for investing about K43 million into vanilla. “Government policy directed that we go into downstream processing and at the same time, increase the production of agriculture commodities like coffee, cocoa, copra vanilla throughout the country but we failed ourselves. “When oil and gas projects came in, we forgot about agriculture and wanted to get rich overnight from oil, gas and mining projects. “Government has price and freight support subsidiary programmes but funds allocated are not enough. “Now the Government is working on a policy to cut middlemen.”

## Future of deep-sea mining hangs in balance as opposition grows

*Ireland and Sweden join countries calling for moratorium on extraction of metals from seabed as UN-backed authority prepares for crucial talks*

Karen McVeigh and Chris Michael, the Guardian.org, 8 Jul 2023 modified on 8 Jul 2023



A pilot vehicle – called a nodule collector – used in deep-sea exploration is lowered into the water in trials conducted by mining group TMC. Photograph: Richard Baron/The Metals Company

The list of countries calling for a pause on [deep-sea mining](#) continued to grow this week ahead of a key moment that mining companies hope will launch the fledgling industry, and its opponents hope could clip its wings, perhaps for good. Ireland and Sweden became the latest developed economies

to join critics, including scientists, environmental organisations and multinationals [such as BMW](#), Volvo and Samsung. The carmakers have [committed not to use minerals mined from the seabed](#) in their electric vehicles. No deep-sea mining contracts have yet been authorised, but efforts by the industry and some states, including Norway, have accelerated the race to [mine for metals in the planet's last unexplored frontier](#).

It is a critical time. With a deadline due to expire on Sunday, commercial applications [for deep-sea mining](#) could be given the green light despite the absence of any regulations. From Monday, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the quasi-UN body in charge of those regulations, will meet in Kingston, Jamaica until 28 July to resume negotiations. Much is at stake. Scientists have warned of large-scale, severe and irreversible harm to global ocean ecosystems, already threatened by the climate and biodiversity crises, if deep-sea mining goes ahead. Too little is known about the ocean's abyss even to draw up regulations, they say. Last month, [the European Academies Science Advisory Council](#) warned of the “dire consequences” for marine ecosystems and against the “misleading narrative” that deep-sea mining is necessary for metals required to meet the transition to a low-carbon economy. Mining below 200 metres (650ft) can lead to harmful noise, vibration and light pollution. There is also the risk of leaks and [spills of fuels](#) and other chemicals used in the mining process.

Researchers this year [discovered more than 5,000 new species](#) – most of them new to science – living on the seabed in an untouched, mineral-rich area of the Pacific Ocean, known as the Clarion-Clipperton zone, targeted by deep-sea mining firms. The tiny Pacific island of Nauru is expected to be the first to apply to the ISA to begin mining, although the country has said it won't sponsor an application on behalf of The Metals Company (TMC) until after the ISA meets this month. Nauru – [with a population of about 12,000](#) – triggered the “two-year rule” in 2021 on behalf of Nauru Offshore Resources, a subsidiary of TMC. This request required the authority to complete the mining code by 9 July 2023, or accept mining applications under whatever regulations exist. Canada-based TMC, formerly known as Deep Green Metals, is partnering with the Pacific states of [Nauru](#), Tonga and Kiribati to explore for deep-sea metals. It has downplayed the impacts and highlighted the need for metals such as cobalt and copper for a transition to clean energy technologies.

That narrative [is disputed](#) by some scientists and environmental groups. They point out that such metals are already mined around the world; that lithium, the key mineral used in many batteries, is not widely present in the deep sea; and that [electric vehicle technology is constantly changing](#). Sweden and Ireland joined a growing list of countries calling for a [moratorium, pause or ban on commercial deep-sea mining](#). They include Germany, France, Spain, New Zealand, Costa Rica, Chile, Panama, Palau, Fiji and the Federated States of Micronesia. The French president, Emmanuel Macron, has backed a complete ban. Other countries that have not yet supported a moratorium have nevertheless indicated they will not give approval without first agreeing regulations. So far, the ISA has allowed companies to explore the deep sea for research purposes only. It has created and adopted regulations to govern 31 exploration contracts, sponsored by 14 nations. As well as Nauru, Tonga and Kiribati, they include China, Russia, South Korea, India, Britain, France, Poland, Brazil, Japan, Jamaica and Belgium. But the failure to establish a regulatory framework for commercial mining before the 9 July deadline triggered by Nauru has thrown the ISA into uncertainty, and means all eyes are on the meeting starting next week.

Many critical issues remain to be addressed within the draft regulations, a long document full of temporary text in brackets and marked in red. According to the NGO [Pew Charitable Trusts](#), the ISA has yet to agree what levels of environmental harm would be considered permissible, what would be the criteria for such harm, and how it would assess liability and assign penalties. In theory, each of the ISA's 168 members is involved in its decision making. But in practice, most power lies with a small group of experts known as the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC), made up

of lawyers, geologists and diplomats, with few environmentalists. There is no scientific assessment group to vet applications and no inspectorate to ensure compliance. If the LTC recommends that the council approves an exploitation contract, it can be overturned only by a super-majority of two-thirds of the full council, which comprises 36 states. Other concerns, particularly among smaller island nations and Indigenous communities, which fear being affected most, include how to share the benefits from mining. There is currently no mechanism to do so. At the last ISA meeting three months ago, the head of Belgium's delegation, Hugo Verbist, warned the authority was "sleepwalking into a legally uncertain situation".

This time around, the ISA will address a [new proposal](#) by France, Chile, Costa Rica, Palau and Vanuatu to pause deep-sea mining until all regulations are in place. If passed, it would act as a moratorium but would require approval by a super-majority, or two-thirds, of the 168 assembly members. William Hague, a former leader of the Conservative party, this week called for Britain to support the moratorium. The UK has so far pushed only for high environmental standards, and said it would not support any exploitation licences "unless or until" there were enforceable regulations and sufficient evidence to judge the potential impact on deep-sea ecosystems. Proponents of deep-sea mining have questioned whether a moratorium is even legal for the ISA to institute. Under the UN convention on the law of the sea, which set up the ISA, the authority is charged with regulating mining activities and with protecting the marine environment. However, the treaty also specifies that the seabed and its mineral resources are the "common heritage of mankind", and part of the ISA's remit includes equitable sharing of financial benefits. Despite the opposition, an executive from TMC has said it expects to file an application in the second half of 2023 with the goal of receiving an ISA mining licence in 2024. Production would start by the end of that year or early 2025.

**Cook Islands PM 'proceeds with caution' on deep-sea mining as critics warn over risks**  
*Deadline tied to the regulation of controversial plans to extract seabed minerals looms amid division over the practice.* Jon Letman in Hawaii, The Guardian, 7 July 2023

Days ahead of a deadline that highlights the pressure to develop rules on deep-sea mining, [Cook Islands](#) prime minister Mark Brown said pursuing the controversial practice is "the right thing to do for our country." Brown told the Guardian the small Pacific nation continues to "proceed with caution" as it studies the feasibility of harvesting seabed minerals within its waters. As the Cook Islands moves ahead, opposition to the nascent industry is widespread – including among Pacific states – with some countries calling for a moratorium or outright [ban](#). Those against deep-sea mining are concerned about the environmental impact it could have on marine ecosystems. "Exploring this opportunity is not only the right thing to do for our country, it is the responsible thing to do," Brown said in an email interview, while stressing his government hasn't made a decision on whether it will mine the sea floor.

His remarks come ahead of the 9 July deadline that compels the UN-affiliated International Seabed Authority (ISA) to complete regulations governing deep-sea mining. Those regulations are unlikely to be ready, however countries and companies will still be able to apply for permits to begin exploitation of the sea floor. The Cook Islands is a nation of 15 small islands located between Tonga and French Polynesia, with a [population of about 18,000](#). It estimates there is vast mineral wealth embedded in around 7bn tonnes of [polymetallic nodules](#) sitting on the seabed within in its territorial waters. Forming over millions of years, the typically black, round potato-sized nodules are rich in cobalt, copper, nickel, and manganese. Brown has previously [said](#) the Cook Islands could become a source of critical strategic metals with enough nodules to meet the world's current demand for cobalt for 80 years.

Along with Nauru, Tonga, and Kiribati, the [Cook Islands](#) is a state sponsor of international companies preparing to apply for a permit to mine the ocean floor in sovereign and international Pacific waters. Proponents say deep-sea mining offers states a chance to develop their economies using ocean resources while contributing to a transition away from fossil fuels. While no companies are currently mining the ocean floor, significant exploration work is under way. In 2022, the Cook Islands issued [three exploration licences](#) within its exclusive economic zone. As a result, Brown says 20,000 sq km of Cook Islands' seafloor has been mapped and biological and geological samples collected. The 168-member ISA is mandated to control mineral-resource related activities on the sea floor while ensuring protection of the marine environment.

The ISA has granted 30 active [exploration contracts](#) to 21 contractors including the governments of India, South Korea, Poland, and companies supported by the four Pacific sponsoring states. Ahead of the July deadline, a spokesperson for ISA told the Guardian that exploitation applications can be received at any time and would be the start of a long and rigorous approval process. "Decision making at ISA is based on a consensus and a work plan for exploitation would be approved only if member states ... agree to it. At the moment, it is too soon to say when potential exploitation could begin." In a [statement](#) to the ISA in March, Margo Deiye, Nauru's ambassador to the ISA, stated her country would not submit an application on behalf of its [commercial partner](#) in July.

The [collection of nodules](#) involves the deployment of unmanned robotic vehicles which will vacuum nodules from the seafloor to be pumped back to a ship on the surface. Last year French president Emmanuel Macron [called for](#) a total ban on deep-sea mining, while governments in Germany, Chile, Spain, New Zealand and elsewhere support a [moratorium](#) or ban. Fiji and [Tuvalu](#), which had previously considered supporting deep-sea mining companies, have both reversed course. Fiji has joined Palau, Samoa, Vanuatu and other Pacific nations in demanding a [moratorium](#) or pause. Concerns have been raised by [scientists](#) and conservation bodies like the [IUCN](#), environmental [advocacy groups](#) and [Indigenous people](#). Corporations including Google and Volkswagen have [called for a pause](#), while prominent ocean experts warn of "[enormous damage](#)".

Craig Smith, a professor emeritus of oceanography at the University of Hawaii, specialises in the biodiversity and disturbance ecology of the deep ocean, leading research expeditions in the CCZ. He told the Guardian an estimated 40-70% of the area's species have not been collected. "We're still very early on in censusing the biodiversity of the region that is targeted for abyssal polymetallic nodule mining," Smith said. A recent study documented [over new 5,000 species](#) in the CCZ. He said he's not for or against deep-sea mining but that the activity would have profound and undeniable impacts including the irreversible [destruction](#) of deep-ocean habitat, [sediment plumes](#), and [noise](#) that can affect whales and other marine life hundreds of kilometers from a mining operation. The effects, he believes, may be [more significant](#) than people expect. Fiji-based Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) supports a [global ban](#) on deep-sea mining. Deputy coordinator Joey Tau has been observing ISA [mining code](#) regulatory negotiations for two years.

Speaking from Tonga on the sidelines of an ISA-hosted workshop on equity for sponsoring states, Tau told the Guardian, "We cannot be talking about benefit sharing and equity in the absence of proper environmental regulations and standards." With deep-sea mining dividing Pacific Island nations, Stuart Minchin, director-general of the [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#), the region's largest scientific and technical organisation, said its role is to be objective and support all 27 member nations with "the [best available science](#) on sovereign and regional issues" no matter their position. Brown doesn't expect to receive an application for a mineral harvesting licence for at least several years, and says his country needs more information and data before it makes a decision about whether or not to proceed. The prime minister told the Guardian that as a small island nation vulnerable to external shocks, deep-sea mining offers the long-term prospect for development, diversification, and

future prosperity. “We are the ones in charge of our destiny, and it is Cook Islanders that will continue to make decisions about how our Cook Islands resources are developed,” he said. This article was amended on 8 July 2023 to remove the statement that Tuvalu has joined other Pacific nations in demanding a moratorium or pause on deep-sea mining.

### **Churches to benefit from Wafi-Golpu**

By EHEYUC SESERU, National, 5 July 2023

THE Morobe Government will give three per cent of the K18.5 billion Wafi-Golpu gold/copper mine’s royalty and equity to churches in province. Governor Luther Wenge said one per cent of the mine’s royalty and two percent of equity would be given to churches to support pastors and evangelists. “The State would pay three percent as royalty; provincial government, landowners and churches’ will get one per cent each,” he said. “The 10 per cent equity will be shared as; provincial Government- four percent, landowners –four and churches would be getting two per cent. “The percentage are in millions. “The percentage for landowners will be shared among three landowner groups of Yanta, Hengambu and Babuaf.”

Wenge said the provincial government’s Christian church partnership programme (CCPP) would focus mainly on pastors and evangelists. “We will focus on those who preach the word,” he said. “The person who was responsible for preaching the word and saving our souls. “We will support them so they continue the good work they’ve been doing in evangelising, preaching and providing social services to save lost souls. “We were all called for different vocations and that was theirs as church workers and servants of God. “Their job was not for profit making nor did they receive regular salary, they were called to be the servants of the Lord. “So we have to support them and the church organisations that they belong to.”

### **K940mil invested in Frieda project: Developer**

National, 5 July 2023



PANAUST Ltd has invested over US\$260 million (over K939.9 million) to date since 2014 on the gold-copper Frieda River project, says general manager studies Phil McCormack. McCormack said in Port Moresby yesterday after the Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) granted an extension of exploration tenements to PanAust. “We have spent to date over US\$260 million on the Frieda River

project on the two feasibility studies that were completed, the one in 2016 and then the 2018 addendum to the original SML (special mining lease) application. “And then ongoing community support, government relations and stakeholder engagement that we are committed to in the area so that we maintain a full site presence, 26 staff on site and then we assist with helicopters, medical emergencies, education, health with the community as well, and we support that since 2014.

“Some of the infrastructure that these tenements sit on, we have our main access road, which is the access into the project site, we have the project processing plant area, which is just off the SML application, the mining infrastructure on the SML and then the Frieda River airstrip, which is our airport that we do continue to run,” he said. “We have our hydro dam, a 600 megawatt (MW) hydro dam proposed to be built on the Frieda River, and then within that area all the LMP (lease for mining purpose) area, all the infrastructure will be covered with EL (exploration licence) to start with and then LMP, SML or mining lease or those. “It is an installed capacity of 600 MW but the power system is configured to generate up to 490MW which represents almost half of the PNG Development Strategic Plan’s for 2010-2030 for hydroelectric expansion target of 1,020MW by 2030. “Power will be available for both the mine and the other users.”

## **MRA grants extension for K25bil investment gold project**

By PETER ESILA, National, 5 July 2023



From left: Mining Minister Sir Ano Pala, PanAust Limited general manager studies Phil McCormack and PanAust subsidiary Frieda River Ltd country manager Joel Hamago during the granting of the extension of the exploration tenements in Port Moresby yesterday. – Nationalpic by KENNEDY BANI

THE total project investment for the Frieda River copper-gold project is about US\$7 billion (about K25 billion), says PanAust Ltd general manager studies Phil McCormack. He said that in Port Moresby yesterday after the Mineral Resources Authority (MRA) granted an extension of exploration tenements to PanAust. McCormack said the K25 billion was per the special mining lease (SML) 09 application submitted in 2018. The Sepik development project comprises the Frieda River copper-gold, Frieda River hydroelectric, Sepik infrastructure and Sepik power grid projects. MRA acting managing director Jerry Garry said the Government remained committed to develop the world-class project.

Garry said there were more steps to go before a SML could be granted. “We have the Sepik River, the downstream of where the main tailings or integrated storage facility will be, that in itself poses a threat to the Sepik River and the inhabitants down the stream so there will be a lot of discussions around this. “Six supporting exploration tenements, those grounds will ultimately call for various infrastructures for Frieda River project. “The SML permitting process will require a much longer period because of the complexity of the environment and the various infrastructures that will be

built. “It will undergo very stringent checks and balances to ensure that the processes and the integrity of the structures that we want to build met the standards that are required,” Garry said. McCormack said the company was actively engaging with communities down the river. “We just completed a Sepik River engagement campaign in the first quarter (Q1) and Q2 of this year,” he said.

### **Alluvial mines seen as crucial for cash flow, job creation**

By JIMMY KALEBE, National, 4 July 2023

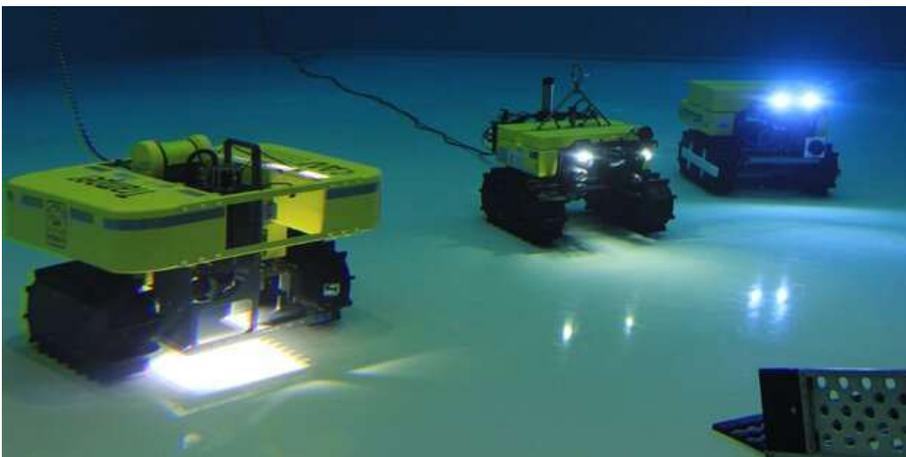
ALLUVIAL mining in Morobe’s Wau-Waria creates employment, increases cash flow for individual families, and reduces law and order problems, according to an official. Yamo Alluvial Mining operations manager Johnson Sengi said last Thursday during the Wau-Waria consultative development forum held at Kaindi Hall in Wau town that this sector has created employment since the early exploration days. Sengi said from June to December 2019, his firm made over K1.4 million and that amount increased between March and December 2020 to more than K2 million. “Between January and December 2021 the company made more than K2.2 million and just last year, between January and December, we made K4.4 million in revenue from alluvial mining,” he said.

According to Sengi, since they started engaging in alluvial mining from 2019 up till now, they have generated more than K10.1 million. “Alluvial mining has a great potential to deliver the best returns for families and businesses on a sustainable basis,” he said. Meanwhile, local MP Marsh Narawec told the forum that small scale mining need to have its own Act to fully regulate the sector. “This sector has brought with it social and environmental issues, so there is a need for this sector to have its own Act,” he said. Narawec said that the current Mining and the Environment Act do not accommodate small scale mining sector and even the alluvial miners are not covered by any of these Acts. Sustainable alluvial mining service presenter Immaculate Javia said 20 per cent of the world’s gold production came from the alluvial mining sector. “Almost 15 million people worldwide are engaged in alluvial mining and about five million or more of these people are women and girls,” Javia said.

### **Abbau von Mineralien auf dem Meeresboden: Postfossile Profitgier**

*Anstatt den Verbrauch zu drosseln, setzt die Autoindustrie auf andere Rohstoffe als Gas und Öl. Auch wenn die Natur erneut Schaden nimmt.*

Kommentar von Heike Holdinghausen, taz, 4. Juli 2023



Unterwasserfahrzeuge für die Tiefsee, noch im Testbecken; Foto: K&K Lars Grübner/Alfred Wegener Institut

Das Thema Tiefseebergbau hat ein großes Potenzial. Es kann zu einem Symbol dafür werden, dass die Menschheit auch nach dem Ende des Ölzeitalters weitermacht mit Raubbau und Verschmutzung. Oder es wird zu einem Beispiel dafür, dass sie im postfossilen Zeitalter mit den natürlichen

Ressourcen besser und klüger umgeht als bisher. Diese Chance ist ja da. Wenn wir für über eine Milliarde Autos auf der Welt keine Kraftstoffe aus Erdöl mehr nutzen wollen – dann steigen wir doch um. Wir bauen dort, wo wir in Städten wohnen, einen [hervorragenden öffentlichen, elektrischen Nahverkehr](#) auf. Das spart Ressourcen und macht nicht nur Schluss mit CO<sub>2</sub>, und Feinstaub, sondern auch mit Stau, Enge und Parkplatzsuche.

Wir nutzen Energie nicht nur effizienter, sondern verbrauchen insgesamt weniger, weil wir in kleineren Einheiten wohnen, mehr teilen, mehr reparieren. Wir benötigen zwar mehr Windräder und Photovoltaik-Anlagen als heute, müssen aber die Gesamtmenge an fossiler Energie, die wir derzeit nutzen, nicht ganz durch erneuerbare ersetzen. Jede Tonne Metall, die wir nicht verbauen, müssen wir auch nicht fördern. Allerdings weisen nicht nur die geplanten Absatzzahlen der [Autoindustrie](#), sondern auch politische Entscheidungen, wie die der Regierung in Oslo, in eine andere Richtung: weiter wie bisher, nur mit anderem Material. Norwegen ist reich geworden durch den Verkauf von Öl und Gas. Und es will reich bleiben durch den Verkauf von Rohstoffen, die für Technologien des Zeitalters der Erneuerbaren benötigt werden.

Dass es dadurch die durch Übersäuerung, Erwärmung, Verschmutzung und Überfischung ohnehin geschwächten Ozeane weiter schädigt, will die Regierung offenbar billigend in Kauf nehmen. Ob im Zuge der Transformation zur Klimaneutralität das Zeitfenster für einen anderen Umgang mit der Natur noch offen ist, wird sich daher in den nächsten Monaten auch in Kingston zeigen. Auf Jamaika will sich die Staatengemeinschaft nach jahrelangem Ringen konkrete Regeln für den Tiefseebergbau geben.

Das ist schwierig, weil wir wenig über den immer nachtschwarzen Lebensraum in Tausenden Metern Tiefe wissen. Was passiert, wenn Bergbauroboter Sedimente aufwirbeln? Wenn Maschinen Lärm verursachen? Weil die Lebensgemeinschaften auf dem Meeresboden bislang nur schlecht erforscht sind, fordern einige Staaten gar, ihn zunächst nicht anzutasten und ein Moratorium für den [Tiefseebergbau](#) zu erlassen. Sich Zeit nehmen, abwägen und künftig klüger handeln – wenn das unten in der Tiefsee künftig möglich wäre, wäre das ein Grund für Zuversicht oben an der frischen Luft.

### **Tiefseebergbau in Norwegen: Umstrittene Knollenernte**

*Vor Norwegen liegen Manganknollen mit Mineralien und seltene Erden. Die Regierung plant den Abbau, die Folgen für das Ökosystem sind unbekannt.*

Reinhard Wolff, taz, 4. Juli 2023



Norwegens Ölplattformen wie hier in der Nordsee werden durch die Energiewende zu Auslaufmodellen; Foto: Hakon Mosvold Larsen/Scnpix via ap

STOCKHOLM *taz* | Schon in einigen Jahren sollen die Tiefseeroboter vor der norwegischen Küste fahren. Sie werden den Meeresboden durchpflügen, um dort Kupfer, Nickel, Kobalt und seltene Erden abzubauen. So zumindest die Vorstellung der norwegischen Regierung. Am Dienstag vergangener Woche legte sie dem Parlament in Oslo eine Beschlussvorlage zur neuen „Meeresindustrie“ für die „Gewinnung von Mineralien auf dem Meeresboden“ vor. Vom Nordatlantik nördlich der Inselgruppe der Lofoten und Vesterålen bis zur [Arktisinsel Spitzbergen](#) in der Barentssee sollen 282.000 Quadratkilometer des Festlandssockels – das entspricht drei Viertel der Fläche Deutschlands – für diesen „kommerziellen Bergbau“ freigegeben werden. In einem 82-seitigen Weißbuch skizziert die Regierung eine Strategie für die Erschließung und Bewirtschaftung dieser Ressourcen. Darunter wird auch die Ambition genannt, „weltweit führend im fakten- und wissensbasierten Management von Meeresbodenmineralien“ zu werden.

Praktisch soll das ähnlich gehandhabt werden wie bei der jetzigen Offshore-Öl- und -Gasgewinnung: Oslo schreibt nach und nach Lizenzen für räumlich begrenzte Felder in den fraglichen Meeresgebieten aus und interessierte Konzerne können Konzessionen für eine Erkundung und spätere Förderung erwerben. Die sollen genehmigt werden, wenn die Konzerne einen „nachhaltigen und verantwortungsvollen“ Abbau nachweisen können. Norwegen wurde in den vergangenen 50 Jahren [mit der Öl- und Gasförderung in der Nordsee](#), dem Nordatlantik und der Barentssee zu einem der reichsten Länder der Welt. Nun hofft man offenbar zeitlich passend zum sich abzeichnenden Ende der fossilen Energiegewinnung neue Vermarktungsmöglichkeiten zu finden. Und die erneuerbaren Energien verlangen geradezu Mineralien, Erze und seltene Erden.

### **Nachfrage nach Rohstoffen werden steigen**

Ein für das Land verlockendes Szenario, das Öl- und Energieminister Terje Aasland gleich als verantwortungsvollen Einsatz Norwegens für eine weltweite grüne Energiewende anpreist: „Wir brauchen Mineralien, um die grüne Wende zu schaffen. Heute werden diese Ressourcen von einigen wenigen Ländern kontrolliert, was uns verwundbar macht. Meeresbodenmineralien können eine Quelle für wichtige Metalle werden.“ Oslo verweist auf Berechnungen der Internationalen Energieagentur IEA, wonach die Nachfrage nach Kupfer und seltenen Erden um 40 Prozent, die nach Nickel um 60, nach Kobalt um 70 und nach Lithium um 90 Prozent steigen wird. Nach jahrelangen geologischen Untersuchungen ist die staatliche Ölbehörde Oljedirektoratet überzeugt, dass Norwegen mit den polymetallischen Knollen („Manganknollen“), die in seiner Wirtschaftszone auf dem arktischen und subarktischen Meeresboden zu finden sind, einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Deckung dieses Bedarfs leisten könnte.

Als besonders vielversprechend gelten die Ergebnisse einer 2018 gemachten Expedition am vulkanischen Mohns-Riff zwischen dem Eiland Jan Mayen und der Bäreninsel. Man schätzt beispielsweise die Vorkommen von Kupfer und Zink auf 38 und 45 Millionen Tonnen. „Und Norwegen verfügt bereits über eine umfassende Erfahrung bei der nachhaltigen und verantwortungsvollen Bewirtschaftung von Meeresressourcen“, betont Aasland. „Dieser Vorschlag ist eine Katastrophe. Die Regierung beweist damit, dass sie die Probleme solcher Aktivitäten in Bezug auf die Natur und die Klimakrise nicht verstanden hat“, reagierte Lars Haltbrekken, der Vorsitzende der sozialistischen Linkspartei, auf die Vorlage. Offenbar glaube man keine Rücksicht darauf nehmen zu müssen, dass „das Leben im Meer bereits durch die globale Erwärmung bedroht und der Meeresboden ein wichtiger Kohlenstoffspeicher ist“.

### **Ex-Umweltminister: Norwegen werde umweltfeindlich**

Einen „neuen Tiefpunkt beim Umgang Norwegens mit dem Meer und der Umwelt“ beklagt Fredric Hauge, Vorsitzender der Umweltorganisation Bellona: „Wir kennen die Ökosysteme gar nicht, die wir jetzt zerstören wollen.“ Von einem „schwarzen Tag“ spricht Karoline Andaur, Generalsekretärin des [WWF](#) Norwegen: Angesichts der „vielen Wissenslücken, die wir heute haben, und trotz aller Warnungen der weltweit führenden Meereswissenschaftler so einen Schritt tun zu wollen ist nicht

weniger als ein Skandal“. „Die Behauptung, dass wir diese Mineralien für den grünen Übergang brauchen, ist Unsinn“, kritisiert auch der liberale Ex-Umweltminister Ola Elvestuen: „Die Regierung macht Norwegen zu einem der umweltfeindlichsten Länder der Welt, zusammen mit dem Inselstaat Nauru. Das ist haarsträubend.“

Der sozialdemokratische Ministerpräsident Jonas Gahr Støre wirft solcher Kritik vor, sich vor dem Dilemma eines grünen Übergangs zu drücken. Natürlich gebe es ein „Spannungsverhältnis zwischen der Bekämpfung des Klimawandels und dem Schutz der Natur“. Aber da gelte es eben abzuwägen. Zwangsläufig würden durch die Abbauaktivitäten Lebensräume bestimmter Arten verschwinden, heißt es auch im Weißbuch. Solche Folgen seien aber nur zeitweilig, räumlich „im Verhältnis zur Gesamtfläche des Meeresbodens sehr begrenzt“ und nicht vergleichbar mit den Umweltschäden, die beispielsweise durch eine größere Ölpest entstehen könnten.

### **Nicht mal die Regierung ist einig**

Solche Argumentation konnte allerdings nicht einmal Gahr Støres eigene Partei zur Gänze überzeugen. Sie ist zur Frage des Tiefseebergbaus gespalten, die Jungsozialisten fordern ein Verbot. Auch [in der Koalition aus Sozialdemokraten und Zentrumspartei](#) ist man uneinig: Kritik gibt es vor allem aus dem Umwelt-, dem Fischerei- und dem Außenministerium. Im Parlament wäre die Minderheitsregierung auf Stimmen der Opposition angewiesen. Einige Parteien sind noch unschlüssig. „Natürlich ist es einfach, dagegen zu sein“, appelliert Terje Aasland: „Aber dann erwarte ich auch Alternativen, wo wir die Mineralien für die grüne Wende herbekommen wollen.“

### **Regeln für den Tiefseebergbau: Ein halb geschriebenes Gesetz**

*Bis Sonntag soll die Internationale Meeresbehörde den Rohstoffabbau am Meeresboden regeln. Das wird nicht klappen.* Heike Holdinghausen, taz, 4. Juli 2023

Was geschieht am 9. Juli? Das fragen sich gerade viele, die sich für die Tiefsee interessieren – sei es, weil sie dort wertvolle Bodenschätze vermuten oder weil sie deren fragiles Ökosystem schützen wollen. Das liegt nicht nur an der am Sonntag beginnenden nächsten Sitzung der Internationalen Meeresbehörde in Kingston, Jamaika. Sondern auch an einer wichtigen Frist, die an diesen Tag abläuft. Zwei Jahre hatten die Mitgliedsstaaten der Organisation Zeit, sich Regeln für den Tiefseebergbau zu geben – doch das haben sie nicht geschafft. Nun könnte das im kleinen Inselstaat Nauru ansässige Unternehmen Nori auch ohne detaillierte Regeln eine Lizenz dafür beantragen, metallhaltige Knollen vom Boden des Pazifiks abzubauen.

Die Manganknollen in der Tiefe enthalten wichtige Industriemetalle wie Mangan, Kupfer, Kobalt, Nickel und [Molybdän](#). Der kanadische Rohstoffkonzern The Metals Company möchte mit ihrem Abbau beginnen und hat als notwendigen staatlichen Partner dafür Nauru gewonnen. Wird das Unternehmen am Sonntag also einen Antrag auf eine Lizenz stellen? „Am 9. Juli passiert vermutlich erst mal gar nichts“, sagt Carsten Rühlemann von der Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe. Er bereitet in Kingston in der Rechts- und Fachkommission der Internationalen Meeresbodenbehörde [die nächste Sitzung vor](#).

In dem Gremium würden politische Fragen – wie der Umgang mit dem Frist-Ende für die Regelerstellung – nicht behandelt, sagt der Experte, aber natürlich sei es Thema für Pausengespräche. „Nauru hat angekündigt, keinen Antrag zu unterstützen, solange es keine Regeln gibt“, so Rühlemann. Er hält den Weg Naurus, Druck aufzubauen, nicht für verwerflich. „Es waren immerhin zwei weitere Jahre Zeit, Regularien fertigzustellen, an denen schon seit 12 Jahren gearbeitet wird“, sagt der Meeresgeologe, „jetzt ist Bewegung in das Thema gekommen“. Inzwischen lägen 107 Paragraphen und 14 teils umfangreiche Anhänge und Richtlinien vor. Anfang 2025, glaubt Rühlemann, könne das Regelwerk fertig sein. Zurzeit berieten die Fachleute der Kommission über Grenz- und

Schwellenwerte etwa für die Belastungen mit Schadstoffen, für das Aufwirbeln von Sedimenten oder die Belastung durch Licht und Lärm.

### **Norwegen nicht von Regeln betroffen**

Auf dem Boden der Tiefsee herrschen ab einer Tiefe von etwa 1.000 Metern extreme Lebensbedingungen in völliger Dunkelheit. Spuren im Schlick bleiben jahrzehntelang erhalten. Was Roboter auslösen, die den Schlick umgraben und Knollen fördern, ist bislang unklar. Naturschützer, die die Verhandlungen auf Jamaika verfolgen, betrachten den Vorstoß Norwegens zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt deshalb mit großer Sorge. Zwar sei Norwegen nicht von den Regeln der Meeresbodenbehörde betroffen, solange es in seinen Hoheitsgewässern bleibt. Doch: „Wenn der Tiefseebergbau international beginnt, kann die Regierung in Norwegen Bedenken im eigenen Land leichter abtun“, sagt Seidensticker. Und „wenn die Staatengemeinschaft ihn überwiegend kritisch sieht, hätte sie ein Argumentationsproblem“. Es zeichne sich in Kingston nämlich ab: „Es gibt keinen Automatismus, dass jeder Antrag, der eingeht, auch genehmigt wird.“

Auch Tim Packeiser von der [Umweltorganisation WWF](#) sagt, er sei bislang noch „relativ ruhig“. Es seien noch zu viele Fragen ungeklärt für Anträge – und viele der 169 Mitgliedstaaten der Meeresbodenbehörde stünden dem Tiefseebergbau durchaus skeptisch gegenüber. 15 von ihnen – darunter Deutschland, Belgien und seit Neuestem auch die Schweiz, Sitz global agierender Bergbaukonzerne – setzen sich ausdrücklich für ein Moratorium ein, solange das kaum bekannte Ökosystem Meeresboden der Tiefsee nicht besser erforscht ist. Dass Norwegen aber gerade jetzt seine Erkundungspläne verkündet habe, sei gewiss kein Zufall, sagt Packeiser. „Norwegen handelt in der Regel strategisch und nie zufällig“, sagt der Meeresökologe, „der Vorstoß hat sicherlich auch die Absicht, die Position Naurus zu stärken“. Es sei bemerkenswert, dass Norwegen vorpresche in einer Situation, in der die Staatengemeinschaft versuche, sich auf einen Umgang mit diesem schwierigen Thema zu einigen.