GRIFFMUN 2024

Ethics of Deep Sea Exploitation

DOALOS *(DIVISION FOR OCEAN AFFAIRS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA)*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2024



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Vice Chair
Kaylah Rhee

Legal
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Please send your position papers and any questions to doalosgriffmun24@gmail.com by January 28, 11:59 pm!

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Chair Introductions

HEAD CHAIR

Hello Delegates! My name is Dana Kim, and I am so excited to head chair for this committee at GRIFFMUN 2024. I am currently a senior at Los Alamitos High School, and this will be my fourth year as part of the LAHS MUN team. From hosting GRIFFMUN to going to New York with my fellow MUN delegates, I made incredible memories as part of this tight-knit community. I am also actively involved in ASB, the debate team, and CSF at our school, so there's usually always something going on at school. I am so excited to meet you all, and I hope this conference is one that you guys truly enjoy!

VICE CHAIR

Hello Delegates! My name is Kaylah Rhee, and I will be your vice chair for DOALOS at this year's GRIFFMUN. I am a junior and this will be my second year participating on Los Alamitos's MUN team. Even though I have relatively little experience with MUN compared to some of our board members, I have seen significant improvement in my public speaking skills and my interest in global issues. Outside of MUN, I am also a part of my school's science olympiad team, as well as our varsity swim team. I have been swimming for more than seven years outside of our high school swim team, and absolutely love the memories and friends I've made along the way. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you, and can't wait to see what you prepare for our committee!

LEGAL

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Hello Delegates! My name is Jocelyn Jackson, and I will be your legal for this committee for this year's GRIFFMUN. I am a senior and this is my first year participating in Los Alamitos MUN. Even though I have only been in this club for a couple of months I have enjoyed getting to work with others and I have seen improvement in my public speaking. Outside of MUN, I participate in Ethnic Studies Club and CSF. I actively volunteer for Children's Hospital of Orange County Foundation as well as volunteering for a non profit raising money for the hospital as well as raising awareness for Sickle Cell disease. I'm super thrilled to meet all of you, and can't wait to have an amazing day with you guys!

Committee Description

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea conducts various activities, including providing assistance and guidance to countries in matters concerning maritime boundaries, marine resources, and ocean governance. It aids in the resolution of disputes related to the interpretation and application of UNCLOS, supports capacity-building initiatives for developing countries, and facilitates the coordination of efforts among stakeholders to protect the marine environment and foster sustainable ocean management practices. Additionally, DOALOS acts as a forum for discussions, exchanges, and negotiations among nations to address emerging challenges in ocean governance, such as maritime security, conservation of marine biodiversity, and the sustainable use of marine resources. The committee wishes to discuss the ethical value of exploiting these marine resources, and how it plays a role in other maritime sectors. The dias hopes that delegates can come up with creative solutions that will account for current issues and circumstances while preparing for GRIFFMUN 2024.

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Background

Even though the Earth's surface is estimated to be about 71% ocean alone, 95% of its limitless depths remain unexplored. The ocean's vastness offers limitless resources that humanity could utilize for future development and innovation. Full exploration would not only offer us an understanding of marine diversity and humanity itself but also access to rich mineral deposits and other underwater resources.

Currently, the primary sought resource that the deep sea offers are materials for battery construction, such as cobalt, copper, nickel, etc. Most of these resources are contained within mineral rocks called polymetallic nodules. These nodules are estimated to possess resources that exceed the global terrestrial reserve, alongside other geological formations. Currently, regulations surrounding the mining of these resources are primarily focused on initial exploration and possess significant shortcomings when it comes to exploitation and realistic industrial mining.

The exploitation of these valuable resources would be able to facilitate uniform development and foster further innovation. The research and costs required to develop the technology required to explore the harsh pressure of the deep sea's dark environment come at a high price, and an even higher price is necessary to fully utilize any discovered resources. However, deep-sea mining is an extremely attractive investment option in the face of difficulties with mining on land. Terrestrial mines are extremely limited, and their cultivation currently fosters severe economic and human rights challenges, along with environmental concerns such as water overuse and the unnecessary clearing of land. In addition, terrestrial mining can release harmful greenhouse gasses previously trapped in soils, further contributing to the world's current climate crisis. In contrast, deep-sea mining has a much lower environmental impact, due to the

comparatively smaller amount of carbon stored in the ocean floor. However, this does not guarantee that deep-sea mining would have a less harmful impact on political stability, market manipulation, etc. Furthermore, deep-sea exploitation may lead to other negative impacts. Mining may disrupt sediments in underwater plumes that extend up to hundreds of kilometers long would drastically harm existing marine species, limit biodiversity, and ultimately cause harm to all ocean life, additionally endangering all marine-related economic systems, such as fishing.

A societal push for clean energy innovations and environmental preservation further motivates a move away from terrestrial mining and unethical depletion of natural resources made alongside technological developments making ocean exploration much more feasible as an economic prospect. However, deep-sea mining still has many potential benefits that complement equally potential risks.

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UN Involvement

The United Nations focuses heavily on the logistics and ethos of deep-sea mining and exploration due to the rise in geopolitical tensions. In fact, in the past few decades, many developed nations with advantaged technological resources have dedicated resources in sharing knowledge with developing natures. In an effort to create a climate that works to navigate technological gaps in deep-sea exploration, this knowledge-sharing community has largely been favored by the majority.

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is largely involved in the regulation of sea activities in the seabed area. As a branch built from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the group established guidelines for exploration licenses and environmental impact assessment. The areas regulated include the deep-sea floor which has been the interest of many explorers and nations. Especially as more concerns are brought up regarding the exploitation of the deep sea, the ISA has been working to adopt policies that encourage explorations while discouraging exploitative industrial mining on extreme levels.

In recent diplomatic interactions within the United Nations framework, member states have engaged in negotiations to strengthen the legal framework for deep-sea mining. There have been proposals to establish an international body or enhance the role of the ISA to oversee the industry, ensuring that environmental and social considerations are integrated into mining practices. The UN has encouraged transparency in these negotiations, emphasizing the need for inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate the perspectives of all nations, especially those most vulnerable to the potential negative impacts of deep-sea exploitation. Remembering

to uphold the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it's necessary to build upon previous efforts and adapt to changing circumstances.

Possible Solutions

With the advancements of deep-sea exploration in today's society, many issues spanning economic to environmental may arise. As a result of having the oceans provide much material for our human benefit, exploitation of these resources can occur. To combat this issue, strict quotas can be placed on mining companies when extracting resources such as oil, natural gas, and precious metals. Though the quotas will prevent companies from exceeding a certain number when collecting and selling resources, this may also benefit them. Having low supply contributed to the market will allow the companies to maintain higher prices for them. As a result, they can create more profit. Such exploration may come to harm the environment as well like how human activity has on shown on land. To help humanity create less damage to the oceans, something we can do is create an eco-friendly fuel supply. The oil that most commercial ships and submarines use is still harmful to the environment, even today though they are specifically designed for use on the water. Though this may take lots of time and funding to come across if the goal is reached, in the case of damage to exploration vessels the fuel that leaks into the ocean will not be as harmful. Since oil spills and leaks can still occur from vessels, intricate plans or methods can be made to reverse this issue.

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Bloc Positions

African Bloc

The extent of deep-sea exploration has not been a large field of interest in Africa causing its ethics to be not heavily debated. Their lack of funds and resources has caused them to keep their oceans relatively untouched and unexplored. However, despite their shortcomings, Africa has some of the largest potentials in marine exploration. With the advancements the future brings, Africa can soon make a great break in sea exploration.

Asian Bloc

Deep-sea exploration has a major role within the Asian bloc due to its larger EEZ, exclusive economic zone, and because its geography enables such environments to be within their borders. Different regions of Asia have different advancements in exploration. The Eastern, Southeastern, and Southern regions of Asia hold deep-sea exploration at the highest importance compared to the rest of their bloc. Recently, the International Seabed Authority has been issued giving countries permits to mine and drill within the deep seabed. This advancement has the potential to increase debates on the ethics regarding the development of deep-sea exploration as private companies take advantage of the natural resources the sea provides.

Eastern European Bloc

Debates of the ethics regarding deep-sea exploration in the Eastern European bloc are also not a large topic in the region. Currently, any connection to deep-sea exploration deals with the Eastern European bloc's business in conservation, basic exploration, aquaculture, and fisheries. The region's low access to advanced technology and funding has significantly repressed their

ability to pursue deep-sea exploration. Compared to other parts of Europe, the Eastern European bloc has the least access to information potentially due to restrictions as war conflicts ensue, therefore, also diverting attention elsewhere from marine exploration.

Latin American Bloc

The Latin America bloc has some of the most significant amounts of attention to deep-sea exploration. Countries like Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Columbia, and Brazil lead the region in deep-sea exploration as they have the most expeditions compared to the rest of the Latin American bloc. However, many of these explorations have been conducted by foreign organizations. The Latin American bloc intends to set out on more expeditions, only this time led by local scientists from their respective countries. With their studies they intend to understand their deep oceans, conserve the ecosystem, and learn to sustainably manage the habitat and what they offer to humans.

Middle Eastern Bloc

Programs centralizing on deep-sea exploration in the Middle Eastern Bloc have been led by Saudi Arabia. Most recently, Saudi Arabia has set an expedition between the National Center for Wildlife and the nonprofit Ocean X to survey and map the area housing the unexplored “Blue Hole.” Currently, most expeditions have mainly focused on explorations rather than other activities such as mining, therefore, ethics of deep-sea exploration have not gone far as well. All efforts for deep sea exploration have been for learning and conservation.

Western Bloc

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Organizations and the economy of the Western bloc like the United States have made it so that they are the largest lead in deep-sea exploration. The location of this bloc enables such advancements from intriguing ecosystems like coral reefs to the depths of the Mariana Trench. The region significantly depends on the oceans to contribute to markets, therefore, sparking debates on the ethics of deep-sea exploration. As society moves away from the oceans in good reach, they must go forward, as a result, developing such exploration at a faster rate than others. However, with the rise of conservation attempts, the efforts of both intentions collide making it difficult to see through what deep-sea exploration can truly be used for.

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Questions to Consider

1. What kind of framework can be implemented to sustainably utilize the resources of the oceans while maintaining the ecosystem's health?
2. How can deep-sea exploration benefit or harm your nation's economy?
3. How should labor be balanced within this equation?
4. To what extent is your nation already involved in deep-sea exploration
5. Where or through what method can your nation find a source of funds to pay for such an endeavor?
6. Shall there be any repercussions for damages made in the ocean, how will these look like?
7. Can the advancement of deep-sea exploration spark a rise in political, economic, or social conflict?
8. What can deep-sea exploration look like with the help of private organizations? Will this be a positive or negative contribution?

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