Resolution on Norway’s recent decision to advance seabed mining in the Arctic

2024/2520(RSP) - 07/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 523 votes to 34, with 59 abstentions, a resolution on Norway’s recent decision to advance seabed mining in the Arctic.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR and the Left groups.

The ecosystems of the Arctic have been identified as being of central environmental importance for biodiversity, fish stocks and climate regulation. These particularly vulnerable ecosystems are already facing pressure from climate change, resulting in more acidic and warmer oceans, which will likely affect the migration patterns of important fish stocks. Mineral extraction on the Arctic seabed risks releasing methane stored in sub-glacial ecosystems and Arctic permafrost soils.

Serious concerns have been raised about the impacts of deep-sea mining on the loss of biodiversity and on the functioning of the ecosystem, the effects of which will be locked in for many generations to come. **The ocean should be recognised at international level as a global common good** and should be protected in the light of its uniqueness and interconnectedness and the essential ecosystem services that it provides.

On 9 January 2024, the Storting, the Norwegian Parliament, approved a decision to allow for an area of 281 200 square kilometres in the Arctic to be explored for potential seabed mining. The process is open-ended and further decisions on extraction plans or mining permits depend on further democratic decisions by the Norwegian Government.

The EU sent a note verbale to Norway in October 2023 expressing its concern about the significant negative effects from the announced deep-sea mining on fish stocks, fisheries and access to fishing grounds.

The current state of scientific knowledge does not allow for an accurate assessment of the environmental impact of seabed mining, and an international research effort is still required to reach a scientific consensus on this subject. The Commission has stressed the need for **long-term research** in order to truly assess the impacts of deep-sea mining.

Opening up this area to deep-seabed mining could be detrimental to fish stocks and fisheries and could impact the access of EU Member States’ vessels to the fishing grounds in the area.

Parliament expressed its concerns about the Storting’s decision of 9 January 2024 to open areas for deep-seabed activities. It noted that the Storting’s decision includes a process for continued mapping, knowledge acquisition and assessments of the environmental impact of potential mining activities.

The resolution called on the Commission and the Member States to promote an **international moratorium on deep-seabed mining**, including at the International Seabed Authority, until the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities at sea have been studied and researched sufficiently and deep-seabed mining can be managed to ensure no marine biodiversity loss or degradation of marine ecosystems. Parliament called on all countries to apply the precautionary principle and support an international moratorium on deep-seabed mining.

Members recalled that the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) has been signed both by the EU and Norway. They called on all other parties to UNCLOS, including Norway, to sign and ratify it without delay.

Parliament called on the Commission and Norway to engage in a **continuous dialogue** and to **exchange scientific research and knowledge** on the seabed and the sustainable management of the ocean.

Lastly, it underlined that Norway and the EU, through their respective strategies, follow a similar approach regarding a balanced raw materials policy based on mitigation of demand, reuse, efficiency, recycling, usage of waste streams and substitution.