

## **A NUMBER of Pacific church leaders have called for a ban on Deep Sea Mining**

Among them is Cardinal John Ribat, head of the Catholic Church which makes up 27 per cent of Papua New Guinea's population. In a statement the church leaders called on civil society to say no to any development on seabed mining. Other leaders who signed the statement were Reverend Aata Etekia (Kiribati Uniting Church), Pastor Shem Tema (Vanuatu Christian Council), Cromwell Qopoto (United Church of Solomon Islands) and Archbishop Peter Loy Chong (Catholic Church, Fiji). The statement read:

"We, the church leaders and representatives of communities and civil society organizations gathered for an information workshop on 'Seabed Mining' at the Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Suva, Fiji, from April 3 to 8 2017, acknowledge the development in the Seabed Mining and the steps taken by the various governments in the Pacific, especially the Government of Papua New Guinea for issuing mining licenses.

We acknowledge the campaigns against Seabed Mining by local communities in PNG. We are aware of the destruction caused by Seabed Mining on the physical Oceanic environment and the potentially negative impacts on the socio-spiritual aspects of the lives of local communities.

We embrace our Pacific people's underpinning philosophy of 'interconnectedness with the ocean'. The 'ocean is us' and 'we are the ocean'. The ocean is the main source of survival and livelihood for most Pacific indigenous communities and to mine the ocean is a deliberate destruction to our people and the future generation.

Therefore:

1. We call on the PNG Government and other Pacific countries to put a stop to testing of Seabed Mining technology in PNG Land or Seas.
2. We call on the civil society to stand with the churches and the Alliance of Solwara Warriors to say 'NO' to any development regarding Seabed Mining in their area.
3. We call on the Governments and the people of the Pacific to stand together to preserve and protect our common home for the unborn and the future generations.
4. Our Mandate is from God: 'God put man in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it' (Gen 2:15). The world was here before we came on the scene, it is sacred and has been blessed- Who are we to destroy it?
5. We call on all the people and the governments of the Pacific to stand together in solidarity to 'Ban Seabed Mining' in PNG and the Pacific."

Present:

Cardinal John Ribat (Catholic Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands)  
Pastor Roger Joseph (Papua New Guinea Council of Churches)  
Pastor Kinim Siloi (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea)  
Fr. Rozario Menezes (Federation of Religious of Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands)  
Fr. Victor Roche (Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands)  
Rev. Aata Etekia (Kiribati Uniting Church)  
Pastor Shem Tema (Vanuatu Christian Council)  
Cromwell Qopoto (United Church of Solomon Islands)  
Archbishop Peter Loy Chong (Catholic Church, Fiji)  
Rev. Dr. Upolu Vaai (Pacific Theological College)  
Frances Namoumou (Pacific Conference of Churches)