



**CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE**  
of  
Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands

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**PASTORAL MEMORANDUM**

***From: The Bishop President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG&SI***  
***To: All A/Bishops and Parish Priest and all Catholic Faithful and People of Good Will***  
***Subject: The imminent threat that Nautilus or Seabed Mining poses on the Livelihood of our Citizens and the Sustainable Conservation of our Natural Environment***

My Dear Brothers and Sisters and all People of Good will,

This Christmas we are once again reminded of the immensity and infinite love of a caring and relational God with humankind through his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. Mary the mother by her humble and obedient “YES” in faith made it possible for this eternal love to take on human flesh and conceived in her womb, born and dwelt amongst us for our salvation. Through Jesus’ life on earth, the eternal invisible God was able to share his divine love with us in a more humane manner “*to be on earth the heart of God.*” As our source of reflection for this festive season I wish to bring to our attention the Christmas story with the Good Tidings of the angels’ message to the shepherds “*Glory to God in the Highest and peace on earth to people of goodwill*” (LK2:14)

The angels’ message rings relevant for us today and challenges our ways of thinking and living in our present Papua New Guinea and interconnectedness within the global village. Are we being true and faithful in giving “Glory to God in the Highest” and faithfully facilitating his peace on earth amongst one another, our families, neighbors, fellow citizens and everyone in our society? “Peace on earth to all people of good-will” implies in a practical and daily sense “the right balance and equilibrium in all aspects of our interpersonal human and environmental relationships in integrity with the rest of Creation.”

There are so many social issues and practical situations of injustices that rob us of our human dignity thus deny us as individuals, families and communities to fully appreciate and enjoy in abundance the beauty and blessings of the angels’ greetings of peace to all people of good will.

As a nation we’re constantly bombarded by issues around (1) corruption in all its various forms and at all various levels. We are all (2) craving for a just and equal distribution of the benefits of all our natural resources. We cannot ignore (3) the ugly face of violence in our families and communities especially gender base violence that demeans and dehumanizes our

grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters and children. Christmas is about the beauty of human family life and the dignity of all human beings, their integral human development, their very human livelihood and assured sustenance in the present and into the future.

We're challenged with our first responsibility by the Creator at the dawn of creation to be accountable co-creators, responsible stewards and possessive protectors of the garden. While we would like enjoy a more sustainable and responsible life in a web of interdependencies hence in the first place; we've all received who we are and what we have, so we are task as the crown of creation to ensure there is right order in co-existence and co-responsibility in living in our common home planet earth.

With the issue of the Nautilus or seabed mining and which includes and not limited to the ocean floor drilling machines coming onto our shores, reefs and into our deep seas on this festive season as a fake Christmas gift threatens and risks our very own livelihood and creates an imbalance in all levels of interpersonal relationships and webs of interdependencies and denies our peaceful harmonious co-existence.

Definitely we have allowed outside disguised forces and foreign brutal interferences to enter into our more sustainable co-existence with our natural habitat thus posing all imaginable and unimaginable threats and environmental destruction to our garden and our home. Definitely PNG does not need this violation of our natural birth right before our own eyes and in our own backyard. With the imminent threat that this seabed mining poses on our marine life PNG being a coastal maritime state the responsible citizens cannot afford to sit back and be indifferent. We are task to embrace our home and insist that due consideration must be given to the livelihood of our people and their human dignity and integral human development be enhanced at all times.

In Laudato Si No.95, Pope Francis draws our attention to this significant relationship between humankind and nature saying:

“The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others...”

This why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” means when twenty percent (20%) of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive”(LS 95).

The following are some of the many issues that will condone the angelic prophesied peace that we anticipate:

1. The Magado Square in the east of the Simberi Island is the notable largest breeding place for tuna in the world. Within that square is the Lyra reef which is also known to the world as one of the reef that holds the habitat for marine life. This Magado Square is the very reason for Naval Surveillance of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force to ensure there is no illegal fishing and dumping waste from the ships inclusive of bilge and even oil spills in this territorial part of the ocean.



Fish or specifically “TUNA” being precious renewable resources unlike “gold and gas” there is no sensible logic for Tuna being ignored or disregarded even carelessly compromised for the sake of Seabed Mining in which mere *gold* is a non-renewable resource and which will eventually leave the ocean floor desolate and dead once this experimental extractive process is exhausted.

2. The Company that is going to carry out the Seabed Mining is a Canadian Company where in Canada this kind of Seabed Mining is not even allowed and prohibited by law in Canada itself exclusive of other countries other than Canada. So the core issue is: *“why SeaBed Mining that is already prohibited by law in Canada because of their own reasons; how come and how possible that a Canadian company is allowed to carry out this illegal experimental first ever known case – extractive destructive activity in PNG? Is PNG just a mere scientific laboratory and our citizens vested with human dignity are for pure experimentation similar to mere guinea pigs?”*
3. The Drilling of the ocean plates will be done along the St George channel the center nerve of the Pacific Ring of Fire. So what will happen in the event due to human error and massive destruction and disturbance to the ocean floor and ecological systems down there that is still highly not fully known to human science but still awaiting future beneficial exploration and study? How come our political leaders are so keen to interfering with our natural environment and God given blessings, the only real paradise in the whole world?
4. Carteret Islands inhabitants in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville are *“the first Climate Change refugees”* in the world declared by United Nation because their Islands are now sinking as a result of Climate Change and Rising Sea Levels. Currently without the benefit of full knowledge of the wonderful sea-world and its natural exciting possibilities to the enhancement of integral human development, our so called political leaders have rushed their decision to permitting this highly experimental venture thus potentially human destructive and sheer profit driven extractive activities in our seas at the expense and highest price of the livelihood, human dignity and well being of our present and future generations. This is already evident and a living reality that we now have fellow brothers and sisters who by no fault of their own but are now in our midst who are classified as *Climate Change Refugees*.
5. Papua New Guinea being a coastal and maritime Nation, its citizens heavily relies on our seas and reefs for daily sustenance and human survival. In the event of such major experimental SeaBed mining and artificial human disruptions to a natural wonder and ecological system since the beginning of creation we strongly oppose and refuse to allow such damaging extractive activities that highly threaten our natural environment to the detrimental direct attack on our daily livelihood and human sustenance. Sustainability and the mutual co-existence between all the populations and their environment is non-negotiable hence their rightful birthright.

6. For sustainability and employment purposes we must appreciate the Fisheries Industry which involves renewable resources like fish and other marine resources and provides a common job opportunity open to both the formal and informal human resources. On the other hand, with the Seabed mining it involves gold a non-renewable resource that involves restrictive specific experts for job opportunities at the expense of all others.

In light of our current situation this Christmas becomes a state of Emergency and concern for the very Livelihood and Well-being of our people. Christmas is all about human dignity and the value of human life in all its fullness. God in his infinite Love chose to be Emmanuel, God is with us" when entering into the human institution of family Life to enrich and fulfill in abundance.

The Catholic Church in PNG would like to encourage all citizens and all people of good will to take stock of where our country is moving in terms of responsibly and sustainably harvesting and managing our rich natural resources.

Due to the urgency of this situation and we need to raise our voices more louder, I recommend that whatever Mass that will be celebrated by any Priest or Bishops on Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December must in some deliberate sense incorporate the launching of a special Novena to "**Our Lady Star of the Ocean**" where a nine days Novena to our Lady Star of the ocean will commenced (Refer to the Novena Booklet)

This Special Novena Ends with a Mass on the 9<sup>th</sup> day which is the *1<sup>st</sup> January 2018* which is also the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God" All Parish and diocese can have their own Masses but for Port Moresby resident we will have a combine mass at Caritas Secondary School, East Boroko.

All Priest Religious and Lay Catholics are requested to attend this Mass as it is the beginning of a vigorous peaceful negotiation with the State to reconsider the Seabed mining as it is detriment to our livelihood of our citizens and long term marine life sustenance. Thank you very much for your attention and anticipated concern in this regard.

United in promoting the sustainable livelihood of our citizens and caring for our Common Home



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**Bishop Rochus J Tatamai MSC**

President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG & SI