



보도자료



보도시점

배포 즉시

배포 2026. 08. 15. (토요일)

"After Space, the Ocean": Global Competition for Deep-Sea Mining and the International Community's Dilemma

- Resource competition over critical minerals for rechargeable batteries puts international maritime rules to the test -**



Image: The JoongAng

As the electric-vehicle and rechargeable-battery industries expand rapidly, demand for critical minerals such as copper, nickel, and cobalt has surged. Governments and companies are increasingly looking to the deep Pacific Ocean. This has made deep-sea mining a major international issue, bringing into conflict

countries seeking resource security, environmental organizations calling for marine–ecosystem protection, and the International Seabed Authority (ISA), which must establish international rules for commercial mining.

Three Competing Interests Surrounding Deep–Sea Minerals

Commercial deep–sea mining in international waters remains effectively restricted because the ISA has not yet adopted formal mining regulations. Yet as demand grows for metals needed in the transition away from fossil fuels, calls to permit development under strict safeguards are gaining momentum. Three major interests now intersect: countries and corporations seeking capital and resource security; international environmental groups demanding clear standards for the ecological impacts of commercial mining; and the ISA, which must create both environmental safeguards and rigorous commercial–mining rules among its 168 member states.

Geopolitical Dynamics: Critical–Mineral Supply Chains and National Dilemmas

As securing supply chains for critical minerals used in EV batteries becomes increasingly important, China has actively supported exploration and research in an effort to gain an advantage in the deep–sea mineral sector. In a recent interview, the ISA Secretary–General assessed China as the country most likely to begin deep–sea mining first once international rules are in place.

By contrast, several countries—including France, Germany, New Zealand, and Vanuatu—have called for a cautious approach rather than hasty development. The Financial Times has argued that Western support for restraint also reflects a strategic calculation to curb the expansion of China’s influence over critical minerals.

The United States, which is not an ISA member because it has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), has likewise urged, through a House report, the development of measures to respond to China's advance into the deep sea.

The Challenge for International Law: Resource Demand Versus Global Norms

Amid these competing national interests, the global rules governing the common heritage of humankind face a new challenge. In particular, the so-called "two-year rule," invoked in 2021 by the Pacific island nation of Nauru in partnership with a Canadian development company, exposed weaknesses in the current system. Under the rule, the ISA was expected to finalize deep-sea-mining guidelines within a set period. It failed to reach a final agreement, however, giving Nauru procedural grounds to submit an application for a commercial permit. The episode is widely viewed as a leading example of how demand for resource development can collide with international maritime norms amid a regulatory vacuum.

Future Outlook and the Direction of the International Community

Ultimately, today's conflict over deep-sea mining raises a question that goes beyond resource acquisition: how should humanity treat one of Earth's last unexplored frontiers? The international community must consider both the economic and geopolitical stakes of seabed resources and the value of protecting marine ecosystems. Based on the international-law principle that the deep seabed is the "common heritage of humankind," it remains essential to establish science-based environmental standards and transparent decision-making procedures.

The department in charge The 4rd HLMUN PRESS team	Team leader	Total management	CHOI DAIN
	Team member	Writer&Article translator	SONG YOONJIN, JANG SEOYEON
Hallym University Student Council hallym40th_chanlan@naver.com			
Hallym University 4rd HLMUN hallymmun@gmail.com			