Mine waste pollutes Mediterranean

Sir — Garcia-Guinea and Huascar1 discuss the catastrophic environmental impact of huge quantities of waste materials from polymetallic ore mining in South America. A similar situation — fortunately without such dramatic consequences so far — affects the southwest Mediterranean coastline.

Spain, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have a variety of volcanic-related mineral deposits (especially oxides, sulphides and sulphosalts of base and precious metals). Southeast Spain has been mined since 3000 bc, and has more than 120 abandoned deposits (especially oxides, sulphides and sulphosalts). A similar situation — fortunately without such dramatic consequences so far — has occurred in South America.

The Polymetallic ore mining in South America. (There have been under pressure for a long time, and the World Conservation Union considers the Mediterranean a protected area. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the European Union and North African countries affected should monitor this environmental threat which is progressively poisoning rivers, aquifers, soils, beaches and the sea.

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