

# Oasis Earth

Anchorage Alaska  
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## UN Ocean Conference 2022 – Imperative for governments to begin negotiating an Arctic Ocean Treaty and establishment of the *International Arctic Marine Sanctuary*

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As we called for in our 28 June UNOC 2022 Side Event: *Establishing the International Arctic Marine Sanctuary*:



[Recording of Establishing the International Arctic Marine Sanctuary Webinar 062822.mp4](#)

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...it is imperative that governments immediately take bold, unprecedented action to protect the Arctic Ocean by negotiating an Arctic Ocean Treaty, and establishing an *International Arctic Marine Sanctuary* (the Sanctuary) to permanently protect waters and ecosystems of the Arctic Ocean. Civil Society, Indigenous Peoples, and marine science organizations have urged such action for well over a decade, yet to date, little progress has occurred.

As detailed by our Side Event, the Arctic Ocean is one of the most unique and severely threatened regions of the global ocean (see: <https://www.oasis-earth.com/imperiled-arctic>). However, governments have yet to substantively address the challenge of protecting this threatened ocean region. It is urgent that governments take action on this.

While Article 192 of UNCLOS requires that: “States have the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment,” the U.N. and member states have failed this obligation in general, and in the Arctic Ocean specifically. It is critical to remedy this failure.

First, G20 governments must take substantive action at the Bali meeting this November to mitigate the climate crisis: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2022/06/22/this-year-may-be-our-last-best-chance-to-solve-the-climate-crisis.html>

Second, we urge any/all governments to immediately draft and introduce an Arctic Ocean Treaty into the UN General Assembly (UNGA), that will, at minimum, establish an *International Arctic Marine Sanctuary* reserved for peaceful, scientific, and subsistence purposes of coastal inhabitants, to protect this unique biome for all. The Sanctuary must encompass as broad a region of Arctic Ocean waters as possible, and at minimum prohibit all fossil fuel development, commercial fisheries, seabed mining, other damaging industrial activities, and military activity. The Sanctuary must also establish a robust regime to reduce the risks of Arctic shipping and tourism, marine debris, and contaminants.

Regarding the appropriate mechanism, the Arctic Ocean Treaty could be achieved either through a multilateral treaty (as the Antarctic Treaty) outside of the UN system, an Arctic Amendment to UNCLOS that holds in abeyance Parts V (EEZ) and VI (Continental Shelf) thus rendering null and void the 200-mile EEZ and continental shelf claims in the Arctic Ocean, or a broad treaty within the UN system.

It is concerning that UNCLOS, negotiated and signed well before the severity and pace of climate change were broadly appreciated, does not address climate change. As well, the UN climate convention (UNFCCC) does not specifically address the global ocean. This disconnect needs immediate resolution. Governments must negotiate a climate change-specific amendment to UNCLOS, and an ocean-specific amendment to the UNFCCC, both stipulating responsibilities for enhanced ocean protection in context of the stark realities of environmental decline today (see: <https://www.oasis-earth.com/oasis-earth-planet-in-peril>).