

Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

FINLAND

Honorable co-chairs, excellences, dear colleagues, dear friends of the ocean,

- Healthy oceans are essential to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life Below Water.
- Our shared ocean is, however, not healthy, but rather in great distress. The effects of climate change, the loss of biodiversity and the impacts of pollution, including marine litter, deteriorate the status of marine areas all around the world.
- In order to reach a healthy ocean, we need to clearly step up our efforts of marine protection, across all sectors. Finland works decisively towards reaching the goal of protecting at least 30% of the ocean by 2030, both nationally and globally.
- It's obvious we cannot reach the 30by30 goal without protecting the high seas. As part of the European Union, Finland puts great emphasis on the negotiations of a treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- These so-called BBNJ Treaty negotiations, taking place under the auspices of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, are to be concluded in New York later this summer.
- To ensure an ambitious, effective, inclusive and future-proofed BBNJ Treaty, we, first of all, need to enable the future Conference of the Parties of the treaty to effectively decide on the establishment and management of area-based management tools and marine protected areas.
- Secondly, the Treaty must establish a clear and transparent process for conducting environmental impact assessments for planned activities in the area, including assessment of cumulative effects.
- Thirdly, we need to establish effective coordination and cooperation mechanisms, dealing with relevant other international fora, to advance the aims of the BBNJ Treaty globally, and to enhance global and regional coherence.

Dear friends,

- How we treat our oceans, determines how our planet will treat us, and the future generations.
- Our own regional sea, the Baltic Sea, does not include areas beyond national jurisdiction. However, as we all know, ocean knows no borders. In addition to regulating the global climate, ocean is shared in the sense that biodiversity, as well as unfortunately the pollutants, move across sea areas. As the challenges are shared, we also need shared solutions.
- As an Arctic country, Finland expresses particular concern regarding the Arctic Ocean, which remains one of the most vulnerable ocean areas in the world. We must join our efforts in ensuring that the future use of the Arctic Ocean is sustainable and happens in accordance with the principles of

ecosystem based management. We simply cannot afford to get it wrong in the Arctic, and we are running out of time.

Dear friends,

- Finland is convinced that the greatest opportunity to conserve ocean life at a global scale is to secure a strong international legal framework, based on science, setting legal obligations and environmental tools for effective action.
- This is why we need the BBNJ Treaty, and we need it urgently. We wish the best of luck to those involved in the negotiations in August, and remain convinced that the Treaty can be finalized by the end of this upcoming session.
- I thank you.