



# **BBNJ Treaty - The Race for Ratification**

**IUCN, Sierra Leone, Republic of Korea,  
Vanuatu, European Union, AIDA, Birdlife,  
Greenpeace International, Earth Echo International,  
High Seas Alliance**

## **Background on the side-event**

On June 19 2023, after two decades in the making, UN member states formally adopted the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty to safeguard life in the ocean beyond national jurisdiction (also known as the High Seas) - covering half the planet. The BBNJ Treaty makes it possible to achieve SDG14 and deliver Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework to protect at least 30% of our seas by 2030. Its entry into force will also accelerate the accomplishment of many other SDGs - playing a vital role in climate regulation, food security and nutrition, peace and justice and more. The race for ratification of the BBNJ Treaty is the perfect example of how, by working together around the world, we can accelerate action to deliver the SDGs.

## **Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)**

- The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty (also known as High Seas Treaty) is essential to achieving UN SDG14 Life Below Water, because it gives us the legal framework to create marine protected areas and require comprehensive environmental impact assessments of potentially harmful activities in the high seas, which cover half the planet
- The BBNJ Treaty gives us the power to ensure that countries can deliver on their commitment to the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework to protect at least 30% of our seas by 203
- The ocean provides essential ecosystem services such as regulating the climate, absorbing one quarter of our annual CO2 emissions, and providing food and supporting livelihoods for billions of people, so better protecting and managing the high seas is also essential to achieving SDG13 Climate Action and the Paris Agreement, SDG2 Zero Hunger, and SDG3 Good Health & Wellbeing
- The High Seas Treaty offers us a chance to help reduce inequality by giving greater and fairer access to the monetary and non-monetary benefits gained from marine genetic



resources (SDG10), provides opportunities to maintain peace and strong institutions by creating a Conference of the Parties and committees that work together to set and enforce the rules to manage the High Seas (SDG16), and develop partnerships across the many nations that are member states of the UN (SDG17)

- The BBNJ Treaty fills some important gaps in international ocean governance policy, ensuring we can create marine protected areas, introduce comprehensive environmental impact assessments for human activities in the high seas, ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources and build the capacity of countries to ensure widespread and equitable implementation of the agreement
- Many young people were not even born when the first discussions about the High Seas Treaty began 20 years ago, but that does not mean they don't have a stake in its future – it's crucial to engage young people and ensure they inherit a High Seas full of life and potential
- Sierra Leone, Vanuatu, Chile and the European Union will sign the BBNJ Treaty when it opens for signing on 20 September and call on other member states to the United Nations to also do so, and will act swiftly to ratify

#### **Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)**

- All member states to the United Nations should sign and ratify the BBNJ Treaty as soon as possible so that it can enter into force and we can expedite action to protect the High Seas and all that relies on them
- Countries can already take action by providing support to other countries to ratify with financial and technical support
- The establishment of a Preparatory Commission to start preparing for the first BBNJ Conference Of the Parties should be prioritized
- Countries can commit to provisional application of the Treaty, which means that they start implementing it as soon as they have signed or ratified the Treaty, but before it enters into force
- Countries should begin preparing the science, consultations and other work so that proposals for Marine Protected Areas can be tabled at the first BBNJ COP
- It is essential to ensure the participation of youth and indigenous and local communities in the implementation of the High Seas Treaty

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For more information, please visit: <https://highseasalliance.org/>