

**Governing Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction:
Accelerating Ratification and Exploring Opportunities for Stakeholders'
Involvement, 24 September 2024, 13:15-14:30, Conf Rm 5, UN Headquarters**

**Closing Remarks by Ambassador Peter Thomson, UNSG's Special Envoy for
the Ocean**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

All courtesies observed and thank you to all who have made this event such an important step on the route to implementation of the BBNJ Treaty. From today, I believe we can all agree that for successful application of the treaty, we're going to require creative cooperation between industry, civil society, and the treaty's parties and secretariat. With good will on all sides, I see no reason why that cooperation won't be achieved.

I'd like to thank the organizers for bringing us together today and to congratulate the event's speakers for the excellence of their presentations. On behalf of all you, I thank the Presidents of Chile and Palau for gracing us with their presence, and applaud the three Ministers for their historic announcements.

The 3rd UN Ocean Conference is now only eight months away, time enough for the 60 ratifications required to bring the BBNJ Treaty into force. I call on all Parties that have yet to do so, to complete their ratification processes before their arrival in Nice for the UN Ocean Conference. And of course we must go well beyond the required sixty, for the closer we get to universality of ratification, the more effective the BBNJ Treaty will prove to be.

I'd like to congratulate the authors of the World Economic Forum's white paper "Governing Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction: Roles and Opportunities for the Private Sector" and commend WEF and UN Global Compact for committing to work together to implement the recommendations of this timely report. I note the report recommends that the BBNJ Treaty's secretariat and subsidiary bodies should engage industry early and keep them engaged throughout implementation processes. I'm sure that most of us present today would support that recommendation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Conservation of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction is a pressing concern. In Montreal in 2022, the great multilateral consensus of the CBD's Global Biodiversity Framework was arrived at, with its agreed ambition to protect 30% of the planet by 2030. The urgency involved in that timeframe arose from the advice from the best of science that if we did not do so, we would be witness to a massive cascading away of planetary biodiversity. Already a million species are under threat of extinction.

In achieving the 30% ambition the ocean must play its part. While progress on the establishment of marine protected areas within national jurisdictions has been encouraging in recent years, only about 1% of the high seas are protected. Thus, as soon as the BBNJ Treaty enters into force, without delay we must designate and effectively govern marine protected areas in the High Seas. In less than one month many of us will be meeting in Cali, Colombia for CBD COP16, and I call on all concerned to join in efforts there to achieve clear understanding on how we can accelerate identification of protected areas in the High Seas.

These are not ordinary times. We are facing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, with the ocean suffering on all three counts. Changes in the ocean are accelerating – sea level rise, altering currents, marine heatwaves, acidification, deoxygenation, burgeoning levels of plastic and chemical pollution, over-exploitation of the ocean's resources, and mass global bleaching of coral reefs – all presenting stark and alarming evidence.

In such times we must all reach for higher ambition, must give greater consideration to the needs of others, and strive to do what's best for people and planet. To do otherwise would be a dereliction of our duty to our children, grandchildren and those who will follow them. Let us leave today's meeting with determination to conserve and only sustainably use the ocean's resources. Let us be determined to achieve the 30x30 ambition. And let us do all within our powers to achieve universal ratification of the BBNJ Treaty.
