

## **A High Ambition Coalition on Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction**

### **Protecting the Ocean: Time for Action**

The Ocean is of vital importance to current and future generations. There is only one Ocean. Every State, every economic player, every community of people and every individual has a responsibility to conserve it and to use it sustainably.

We, Heads of State and Government and the European Union, are deeply concerned about the continued degradation of the Ocean from human activities escalating the devastating effects of the climate change and biodiversity crises.

We recognize it is important to better steward marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, which comprise 95% of the Ocean and provide invaluable ecological, economic, social, cultural, scientific and food-security benefits to humanity.

We acknowledge that healthy oceans are essential to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular its goal 14 ‘Life Below Water’; and that enhanced knowledge on marine ecosystems is needed.

We reaffirm that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the Ocean and seas must be carried out.

We all share common responsibility for the Ocean health and we need to act, stressing that the problems of Ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole.

We are mindful of the need to promote a science- and ecosystem-based approach to the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity, as well as the precautionary principle when scientific evidence is uncertain or lacking.

We are convinced that the greatest opportunity to conserve ocean life and to sustainably use marine biodiversity at a global scale is to secure a strong international legal framework, based on science, setting additional legal obligations and environmental tools for effective action.

We therefore urge States to reach agreement and conclude in 2022, year of the 40th anniversary of the UNCLOS, the international legally binding treaty under the UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (“BBNJ Treaty”).

We also recognize the contribution of such BBNJ Treaty to the protection by 2030 of at least 30% of the Ocean and seas through an ecologically representative, well connected network including of highly, and fully protected marine areas and area-based management tools.

For this purpose, we will enhance our efforts and continue to work in good faith together to ensure an ambitious, effective, inclusive, fair, balanced and future-proofed BBNJ Treaty that includes the following key elements:

1. Enable the Conference of the Parties of the future treaty to effectively act and decide transparently on the establishment and management of area-based management tools and marine protected areas with effective management plans in order to conserve and sustainably use areas requiring protection in areas beyond national jurisdiction;
2. Establish a clear and transparent process for conducting environmental impact assessments for planned activities falling under the scope of the agreement, including proper assessment of cumulative effects;
3. Establish a fair and equitable benefit sharing regime of marine genetic resources which ensures that the benefits arising from their utilization are shared in the interest of humanity and for the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean;
4. Foster transparency of research activities on marine genetic resources of areas beyond national jurisdictions, as well as inclusiveness in international scientific collaboration, in order to strengthen marine scientific research capabilities of all countries, including developing countries;
5. Recognise, where relevant, the important role of indigenous peoples and local communities and the traditional knowledge they hold.
6. Ensure an effective and reliable funding mechanism to enable capacity building and the transfer of marine technology for implementing the BBNJ Treaty, responsive to needs and priorities, in particular those of developing countries;
7. Establish effective coordination and cooperation mechanisms with relevant international fora, without undermining their mandates, to further the aims of the BBNJ Treaty and to enhance global and regional coherence;
8. Establish an institutional arrangement and decision-making procedures that can respond efficiently to the objectives of the BBNJ Treaty.

We strongly invite all interested States and relevant stakeholders to join our initiative to mobilize action and to swiftly conclude the BBNJ Treaty in 2022 to ensure the conservation and the sustainable use of the Ocean for current and future generations.