



Monday 15 July, 2024

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sent via email to: jsct@aph.gov.au

Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (the Agreement)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Greenpeace Australia Pacific welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) regarding the Agreement.

Greenpeace is a global network of 25 regional organisations in over 55 countries working to secure a world capable of nurturing life in all of its magnificent diversity. Greenpeace Australia Pacific is fully independent and has 1.2 million people in our network across all platforms in Australia alone.

Greenpeace has been campaigning for ocean protection globally for over 50 years, and actively involved in the Treaty process from the beginning, undertaking research, engaging communities and publishing a series of 6 reports outlining the threats facing the high seas and opportunities to repair gaps in global ocean governance. The global Greenpeace network is actively involved across international fora for ocean governance including United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC), International Seabed Authority (ISA), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Whaling Commission (IWC), and Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Greenpeace supports the proposal to ratify the Agreement in accordance with Article 66 and urges JSCOT to encourage the government to prioritise the passage of associated legislation in 2024.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific encourages JSCOT to support:

1. **Swift ratification in 2024 to demonstrate Australia's global ocean leadership** and align with High Ambition Coalition ratification goals ahead of the UN Oceans Conference in 2025.
2. **Beginning preparations for implementation of the Agreement into force and continuing support for Pacific countries to sign, ratify and implement.**
3. **Sufficient ongoing resourcing allocated to relevant agencies** to meet Australia's commitments and position as co-chair of the BBNJ Preparatory Commission.

Please find attached Greenpeace Australia Pacific comments on the National Interest Analysis, and collated submissions of 1,139 Australians who wish to voice their support for urgent ratification.

If you require any further information on this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Greenpeace Australia Pacific via the details below.

Sincerely,



Senior Campaigner, Oceans
Greenpeace Australia Pacific

Greenpeace contact for correspondence regarding this submission

Violette Snow
Senior Campaigner, Oceans
Greenpeace Australia Pacific



Submission to JSCOT regarding BBNJ Agreement Ratification

Summary

The importance of the ocean cannot be overstated. It is home to millions of marine species. Healthy ocean provides critical ecosystem services, sustains the livelihoods of coastal communities and supports the existence and prosperity of all humankind.

The BBNJ Agreement's provision for protected international ocean ecosystems marks a leap forward for protecting biodiversity and reversing wildlife decline. It creates the preconditions to develop a global network of protected marine ecosystems, and has the potential to lead to a more integrated, holistic management of ocean activities, contributing to a sustainable and equitable future for the ocean.

As the Greenpeace International report [*30x30 From Global Ocean Treaty to Protection at Sea*](#) shows, pressure from threats to the ocean including industrial overfishing, pollution and climate change are immense, including in areas earmarked for protection under the Global Biodiversity Framework 30x30 goals.

That is why **Greenpeace Australia Pacific strongly supports the proposal to ratify the Agreement in accordance with Article 66 and urges JSCOT to encourage the government to prioritise a swift passage of associated legislation in 2024.**

Additionally, Greenpeace Australia Pacific provides the following high level feedback and comments on the proposal to ratify the Agreement.

Feedback

- 1. As a member of the High Ambition Coalition (HAC), Australia has a responsibility to demonstrate leadership in global ocean governance by ratifying swiftly in 2024.**

As noted in the National Interest Analysis, the HAC promotes ambition to reach 60 ratifications by the June 2025 UN Oceans Conference. As a member of the HAC, and a country with a long history of ocean leadership, Australia should seek to be ahead of the pack by ratifying in 2024, or in time for the UN Oceans Conference in June 2025 at the latest.

2. Strong public support exists for the Agreement, including over 50,000 Australians who have voiced their support for urgent ratification of the BBNJ Agreement.¹

Australians are renowned for their ocean-loving culture of sand and surf, and with almost 90% of Australians living within 50km of the coast it's no surprise there is strong support from the public for protecting the global ocean.² Australians from every corner of the country have signed our petition calling on the Federal Government to ratify the Treaty urgently and create a sanctuary for the South Tasman Sea and Lord Howe Rise.

3. Resourcing for implementation should be considered early and allocated appropriately to match Australia's role as a leader and as co-chair of the BBNJ Preparatory Commission.

As a global leader engaged with the BBNJ Agreement, adequate resourcing for key departments involved in implementation should be supported by early allocation of funding. Greenpeace supports the NIA proposal for DCCEEW to lead the implementation of the Agreement domestically.

4. Early ratification can build momentum to join global leaders preparing for implementation of a high seas marine protected areas (MPAs).

Australia has demonstrated significant commitment to the Agreement by supporting funding for Pacific countries to sign and ratify the agreement, and by joining the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) goal to protect 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030. Protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030 under the GBF is impossible to achieve without the Agreement entering into force rapidly.

Ratifying swiftly in 2024 provides an opportunity to begin developing a robust proposal to protect biodiversity in international waters adjacent to Australia's marine parks, starting with a marine wildlife corridor in the Lord Howe Rise and South Tasman Sea region.

Planning for high seas biodiversity protection must start now without waiting for ratification and establishment of governing bodies. Until the treaty is implemented, pressures on ocean health including destructive overfishing, pollution and global change are growing and unabated. Greenpeace International analysis in 2023 found a 22.5% increase in fishing hours between 2018-2022 in ecologically important areas.³

Other leading countries are already developing proposals including Chile, which was one of the first countries to submit ratification in January 2024 and began work on a proposal for the Agreement in 2021 to protect the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges, a high seas biodiversity hotspot in the Southeastern Pacific.

¹ <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/act/protect-the-oceans>

² <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/coasts/pressures/population>

³

<https://www.greenpeace.org/international/publication/62121/30x30-from-global-ocean-treaty-to-protection-at-sea/>