



Global Tuna Alliance, Sustainable Seafood Coalition and Hong Kong Sustainable Seafood Coalition Joint Position on Biodiversity in areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)

Context:

- The UN has committed to develop an international legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), which encompass all forms of life in 46% of Earth's surface. Industry leadership in this area could improve the complementarity of this new instrument to the global RFMO framework and ensure the sustainable coexistence of fisheries with other High seas Industries (e.g. shipping, mining); leaving no species or ecosystem behind.
- The new treaty will lead to the implementation of area-based management tools, such as Marine Protected Areas, which is aligned with the growing number of Governments calling for at least 30% of the world's oceans to be protected from damaging activity by 2030¹.
- While most seafood companies do not operate in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ; a.k.a. the High Seas), there is growing evidence that overfishing and high fisheries bycatch rates beyond national jurisdiction negatively impacts coastal communities and ecosystems, thus underscoring the importance of negotiating a Treaty that leaves no one behind and engages all relevant stakeholders.
- The Global Tuna Alliance (GTA) and the Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) have shared objectives with regard to BBNJ and intend to work together to align asks.

We the undersigned agree that:

- Our businesses want to source from healthy and sustainable fisheries, which are intrinsically linked to a healthy marine ecosystem.
- There needs to be increased protection of the High Seas. Currently only ~1% of the High Seas are protected and there is insufficient oversight or accountability of activities that could impact on the global commons, in particular commercial fishing².
- Commercial fisheries impacts represent the largest direct driver of biodiversity decline in the High Seas³. While existing regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) monitor and manage some of these impacts, for example bycatch mitigation measures and move-on rules when encountering deep-sea coral, we believe that the new BBNJ treaty has an important role

¹ As of 28th June 2021 84 Governments were members of either or both the High Ambition Coalition and Global Ocean Alliance

² <https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/marine-protected-areas>

³ Crespo, G.O. and Dunn, D.C., 2017. A review of the impacts of fisheries on open-ocean ecosystems. ICES Journal of Marine Science, 74(9), pp.2283-2297.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317620510_A_review_of_the_impacts_of_fisheries_on_open-ocean_ecosystems

to play in helping manage High Seas biodiversity sustainably, most of which remains unmonitored and unmanaged^{4 5}.

- An ambitious BBNJ Treaty capable of complementing the conservation and management measures of RFMOs is pivotal for ensuring the health of High Seas ecosystems and reducing negative impacts in the coastal Ocean.
- We acknowledge that transformative change is required to address the climate and biodiversity crises alike and the importance of the High Seas in addressing both of these crises.
- We recognise that the High Seas are one of the last global commons, where only a few actors currently stand to profit. As one of those actors, the seafood sector both benefits from and is a pressure on high seas biodiversity, accordingly we recognise the need for strong high seas protection. Furthermore, given the importance of ocean health, the entire world bears the brunt of the negative impacts. This is especially true for coastal and island states, who are often unable to exploit the High Seas themselves⁶.
- A robust treaty is also necessary to address transboundary threats - for example harmful industrial activities taking place just within the areas within national jurisdiction.

How can this be achieved?

- Whilst oversight of target fisheries is the principal mandate of RFMOs, they have a responsibility to monitor and manage impacts on non-target biodiversity. Harmonizing responsibilities of RFMOs and the BBNJ instrument would therefore be an important step. It remains vital that the BBNJ Treaty has the flexibility to comprehensively address the cumulative impacts of human activities on the biodiversity that RFMOs (or other bodies) do not have the capacity or mandate to monitor and manage.

GTA and SSC Asks

- We call on Governments to conclude a robust global Treaty as soon as possible, to alleviate pressure on High Seas biodiversity. This should include the provision of marine protected areas and ensuring future potentially harmful activities are assessed thoroughly through environmental impact assessments.
- We call on Governments to properly integrate an ecosystem approach in policy-making in all relevant divisions of Government and processes, and to use the High Seas Treaty as an opportunity to ensure that the balance between conservation and sustainable use of marine biological resources is achieved.
- We ask that Governments include retailers and suppliers of seafood, such as GTA and SSC members, in stakeholder consultations when developing the detail of the treaty to offer a practical view of the market, and public expectations.

⁴ Crespo, G.O., Dunn, D.C., Gianni, M., Gjerde, K., Wright, G. and Halpin, P.N., 2019. High-seas fish biodiversity is slipping through the governance net. *Nature ecology & evolution*, 3(9), pp.1273-1276
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-019-0981-4/>

⁵ Pacoureau, N., Rigby, C.L., Kyne, P.M., Sherley, R.B., Winker, H., Carlson, J.K., Fordham, S.V., Barreto, R., Fernando, D., Francis, M.P. and Jabado, R.W., 2021. Half a century of global decline in oceanic sharks and rays. *Nature*, 589(7843), pp.567-571. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-03173-9>

⁶ www.prog-ocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Africa-Socio-Economic-Report_FINAL.pdf