

# 30X30

FROM GLOBAL OCEAN TREATY  
TO PROTECTION AT SEA



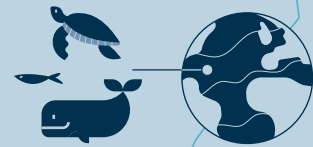
GREENPEACE

PROTECT  
THE OCEANS

# KEY FINDINGS



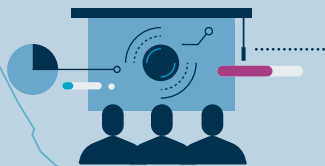
In this report, new analysis of rising pressures on the High Seas underlines the importance and urgency of protecting at least 30% of the oceans by 2030 using the Treaty. 11 million KM<sup>2</sup> per year must be protected to meet the United Nations' 30x30 target that all nations agreed in 2022. The Treaty is the only way to deliver the 30x30 target at sea.



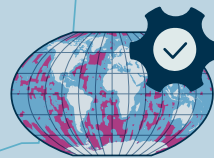
The Global Ocean Treaty is one of the most important international conservation agreements in history and the first focused on conserving marine life on the High Seas.



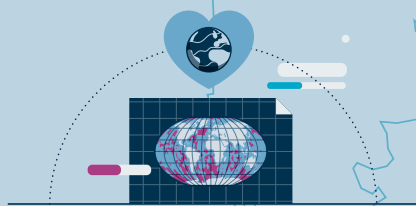
The oceans face large-scale threats and there is little time left to deliver 30x30. Swift action is needed. Governments must ratify the Global Ocean Treaty by the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025 to leave enough time to meet the 30x30 target.



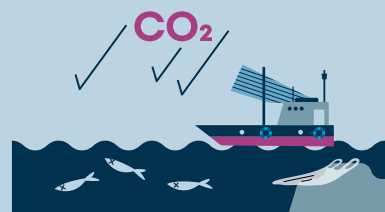
Alongside governments ratifying the Treaty, this report sets out the various institutional arrangements that must be set up. These include a Conference of Parties (COP) and a Scientific and Technical Body. A Preparatory Commission must be established, which can begin implementing the Treaty.



Governments must also begin to develop the first ocean sanctuary proposals alongside ratification. Work on these steps must start immediately. Delay would risk the timely and full implementation of the Global Ocean Treaty and jeopardise 30x30.



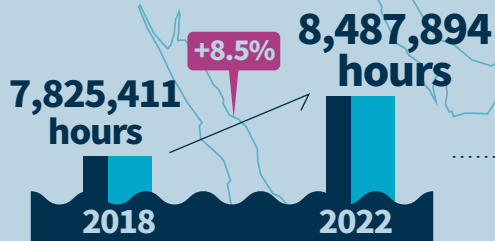
This report sets out the political process for using the Treaty to deliver Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) on the High Seas – from first submitting an MPA proposal to the COP to implementing and establishing a new MPA.



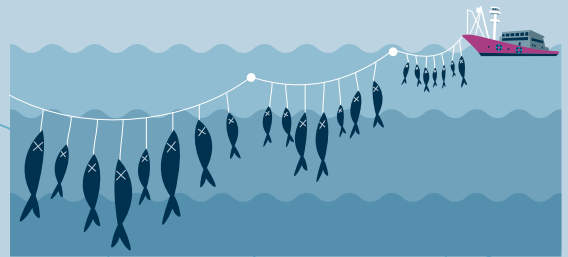
Threats to the oceans are diverse and severe, and are having wide reaching impacts on the health of the oceans. These threats include: ocean acidification, deoxygenation and warming; pollution, including plastics; shipping; the looming threat of an emerging deep sea mining industry; and industrial fishing.



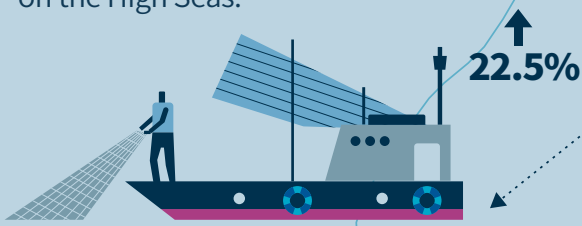
This report includes new analysis that shows the extent of High Seas industrial fishing activity over the last five years. It details the vast scale of High Seas fishing and provides a snapshot of fishing activity in areas recommended for protection under 30x30.



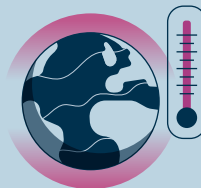
Using data from Global Fishing Watch, Greenpeace International investigators estimated that High Seas fishing hours increased by around 8.5% (662,483 hours) between 2018 and 2022. In 2022, industrial fishing vessels spent a total of 8,487,894 hours fishing on the High Seas.



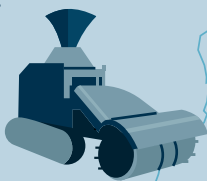
Longliners, squid jiggers and trawlers were the most common gear types. Longliners made up over 3/4 of total fishing activity on the High Seas globally. These vast lines have thousands of baited hooks and can be over 100KM long. This destructive gear type results in high levels of bycatch as it hooks anything in its path.



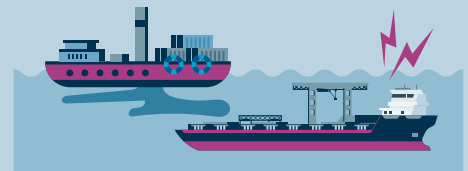
In the areas recommended for protection in 2019's Greenpeace International report *30x30: A Blueprint for Ocean Protection*, there were 2,938,182 fishing hours in 2022 – a 22.5% (541,607 hours) increase from 2018.



Ocean temperature levels have broken records in 2023. Heating coupled with acidification and deoxygenation is changing the chemistry of the oceans. This has vast and wide-reaching impacts on ocean ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as disrupting the vital role oceans play in regulating this planet's temperature and climate.



Deep sea mining poses a significant new threat to the High Seas. Many governments now support a moratorium (ban) on deep sea mining. It is vital this dangerous industry is not permitted to add yet another threat to the health of the oceans.



Pollution, including plastics, continues to worsen. This is having devastating impacts on marine life and ecosystems. Shipping leads to chronic oil and noise pollution on the High Seas and there is always a risk of accidents and spills.



Three high-priority sites are presented as case studies for protection under the Global Ocean Treaty. These sites are: the Sargasso Sea, Emperor Seamounts and South Tasman Sea / Lord Howe Rise. All sites are critically important in terms of biodiversity and experience severe impacts from climate change and industrial fishing. We set out the cumulative pressures on these ecologically-significant areas, then map how each can be protected under the Treaty.



Governments urgently need to take action to protect the High Seas and deliver 30x30. The vast and ever increasing fishing activity in ecologically-sensitive areas earmarked for protection makes this clear. Every year of delay, stacking pressures on the oceans grow. Consequences worsen for marine ecosystems and the billions of people who rely on healthy oceans for their food and livelihoods.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By Callum M. Roberts, Professor of Marine Conservation at the University of Exeter, marine biologist, oceanographer and author.

History was made in March 2023, when the United Nations agreed a new Global Ocean Treaty.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 20 years of preparatory work and intensive international negotiations led to this agreement. The Treaty represents a rare triumph of multilateralism at a time when international relations are deeply strained by conflict. It proves the world can still unite to safeguard the natural ecosystems that keep our planet liveable for all.

However, that multilateral cooperation must continue at pace to fulfil the aims of the Treaty. Time is not on our side.

## MULTILATERAL COOPERATION MUST CONTINUE AT PACE TO FULFIL THE AIMS OF THE TREATY.

### THE TREATY FILLS A KEY GOVERNANCE GAP

The Global Ocean Treaty fills a gaping hole in planetary governance and protection. It is designed specifically to conserve marine life beyond the 200 nautical mile limits of national jurisdiction. This region is commonly known as the High Seas and makes up an immense 61% of the world's ocean.

Under existing nature protection mandates within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), countries must safeguard nature within their national limits and regulate activities of their nationals in international waters. But, until now, there has been no globally accepted means of creating protected spaces in international waters. Nor any regulatory body tasked with preventing the destruction of wildlife living in these seas. Regional and sectoral bodies – like Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, the International Seabed Authority or the International Maritime Organization – make up the current governance system regulating human activities at sea. But this fragmented governance has failed to efficiently protect the oceans.

With the High Seas making up almost two-thirds of the oceans, the consequences of this hole in nature protection are disastrous. For much of history, distant High Seas waters were spared the intensity of impacts seen in more accessible coastal

waters. But this shifted in the last few decades. As coastal resources decreased and became increasingly regulated, the High Seas became a new frontier for industry to still enjoy riches with little oversight and few legal constraints. The result has been a modern replay of the overkill that devastated land-based wildlife when modern humans colonised uninhabited continents and islands.



© Stephanie Keith / Greenpeace

Actor and activist Jane Fonda and Senegalese community leader Anta Diouf deliver a petition signed by over 5.5 million people demanding a strong Global Ocean Treaty to Rena Lee, president of the UN negotiations.

<sup>1</sup> Officially known as the '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'

## STRONG EVIDENCE AND COMBINED EFFORT LEAD TO THE TREATY

Whether direct targets of industry or collateral damage, spectacular, iconic High Seas species have experienced startlingly quick catastrophic collapses. For example, Pacific Leatherback turtles, Pacific Bluefin tuna and Oceanic Whitetip sharks all lost more than 90% of their population in less than 30 years. Entire habitats have been scraped from the deep slopes of seamounts, before scientists and explorers could even see or describe them, leaving them to piece together the losses from scattered remnants.

At first these losses remained unseen, but due to improvements in High Seas monitoring methods, growing scientific access, and effort, these shocking losses were gradually brought to public attention. Acting on this evidence, the path to the Global Ocean Treaty was laid through the combined and sustained efforts of coalitions of environmental organisations, including Greenpeace International, as well as enlightened and proactive leadership by concerned nations.

## LEADERS MUST ACT QUICKLY TO PROTECT THE OCEANS

As this Greenpeace International report shows, fishing pressure across the world's oceans is immense, including in the areas earmarked for protection under 30x30. But these direct pressures combine with a background of worsening chronic stress from human-caused global change. This will devastate marine life without concerted international action on the drivers of change.

These drivers include:

- **greenhouse gas emissions and their consequences**  
– warming, deoxygenation, declining productivity and acidification
- **chemical, noise and plastic pollution**
- **growing shipping volumes**

New emerging activities like deep sea mining make effective governance of international waters even more urgent.

Ocean sanctuaries – especially highly and fully protected areas free from all destructive activities – are fundamental to solving the present ocean crisis. They create space for:

- **marine life to recover and thrive, and build resilience to fast global change**

- protecting vast stores of blue carbon that can slow climate change
- safeguarding the food and livelihoods of billions of people worldwide

## WHY THE GLOBAL OCEAN TREATY CAN HELP

To address existing and emerging threats to High Seas biodiversity, the Global Ocean Treaty includes four major provisions:

- **Marine genetic resources, including access and benefit sharing**
- **Area-based management tools, including Marine Protected Areas**
- **Environmental impact assessments**
- **Capacity building and the transfer of marine technology**

The first part of the Treaty sets out the purpose, principles and definitions that apply throughout. Crucially, Parties are required to cooperate to achieve the Treaty's objectives, including "with and among relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies".<sup>2</sup> Article 7 references both the precautionary and polluter pays principles in application of the Treaty. The preamble affirms nothing in the agreement will diminish or extinguish the existing rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Treaty's provision for protected international spaces marks a leap forward for protecting biodiversity and reversing wildlife decline. It creates the preconditions to complete a global network of protected areas across land and ocean. These will secure the functioning, vitality and wonder of the biosphere for future generations and in perpetuity.

The final Global Ocean Treaty text was formally adopted at the United Nations on 19 June 2023. This started the process of bringing the Treaty into effect, which will only happen 120 days after 60 nations ratify, approve or accede to it.

Previous experience suggests this can take a long time. For example, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea took 12 years to ratify. High Seas protection is long overdue, and the extreme need for effective protection grows by the day. This time around the global community must act urgently.

<sup>2</sup> **United Nations General Assembly** 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. [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/Ch\\_XXI\\_10.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/Ch_XXI_10.pdf)



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Greenpeace USA activists project images onto New York's iconic Brooklyn Bridge, on the eve of the IGC5 where governments met to negotiate a Global Ocean Treaty.

## NATIONS SHOULD RATIFY BY 2025 TO MEET THE 30X30 TARGET

**WE URGE THAT NATIONS BRING THE TREATY INTO FORCE IN TIME FOR THE UN OCEAN CONFERENCE IN 2025.**

Achieving that will require sustained, intensive, multifaceted and focused effort by nations and civic society. This should mirror, or even exceed, the efforts that brought the Treaty into being.

One compelling reason for doing so is 30x30. This new target to protect 30% of sea and land by 2030 was set last year by the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming-Montreal.

That 30% target is impossible to achieve in the ocean if the High Seas are left out. A functional Global Ocean Treaty is essential to success – but the timescale is incredibly tight.

Aiming for ratification by 2025 would leave just five years to develop a High Seas network of protected areas. This will require effort and international collaboration on a scale never attempted before in any sphere of conservation. As the scientific journal *Nature* noted about the Treaty, to seize this once in a generation opportunity requires us to “use every idea and instrument available”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Nature* (2023) UN high seas treaty is a landmark – but science needs to fill the gaps - March 15, 2023. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00757-z>

## PROPOSALS FOR PROTECTED SITES SHOULD START NOW

Planning for High Seas biodiversity protection should also begin. It cannot wait for Treaty ratification and establishment of its executive bodies and functions. We must implement a swift and coordinated joint effort to identify actions and candidate protected area proposals, at the same time as ratification. If not, a historic victory could become a historic failure.

Until the Treaty is implemented, the pressures on ocean health – overfishing and destructive fishing, pollution and global change – grow urgent and unabated. Our new analysis found a 22.5% increase in fishing hours between 2018 and 2022 in the ecologically-important areas recommended for protection under 30x30 in our 2019 modelling<sup>4</sup>. This makes clear the urgent need for action. With every moment of delay, the threats facing the high seas worsen.

**IF WE DON'T RATIFY AND IMPLEMENT THE TREATY IN RECORD TIME, A HISTORIC VICTORY COULD BECOME A HISTORIC FAILURE.**

The plunder of the High Seas is ongoing and new industries wait in the wings. Ocean temperature records are being broken. Sea level rise and ice loss are speeding up. Tipping points approach, although we cannot tell how far off they are. Precaution demands urgency.



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Greenpeace has been campaigning in West Africa for the establishment of a sustainable, low impact fisheries policy.

## SCIENCE PROVIDES THE EVIDENCE TO DEVELOP PROPOSALS

To address the need for rapid progress, we propose that nations collaborate to produce candidate sites ready for scrutiny and discussion by the first COP. This must be held within one year of the Global Ocean Treaty's entry into force.

Fortunately, years of ongoing scientific description and evaluation of High Seas biodiversity provides a large and secure foundation of evidence for such proposals.

A 2006 Greenpeace International report *Roadmap to Recovery: A Global Network of Marine Reserves*, showed it was possible to identify high-priority areas for High Seas protection and sketch out the fundamentals of a robust protected area network for international waters – even with the understanding available at the time.

Many other NGOs and scientists have advanced the field rapidly since then, including the UN CBD. They launched a process to identify and describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) in 2010. This collaborative international effort has described over 320 EBSAs to date, many of which meet multiple suitability criteria to establish a protected area and/or apply other measures to safeguard their wildlife.

In 2019, leading academics at the University of York, University of Oxford and Greenpeace International published a new proposal for protection of international waters: *30x30: A Blueprint for Ocean Protection*. They took advantage of recent scientific advances in understanding the High Seas and their wildlife. The report employed cutting-edge network design tools to create proposals for climate-resilient, interconnected systems of protected areas and mapped out systems that reach every corner of the global ocean, and from surface to seabed.

<sup>4</sup> Greenpeace International (2019). 30x30 A Blueprint for Ocean Protection – How we can protect 30% of our oceans by 2030. <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/publication/21604/30x30-a-blueprint-for-ocean-protection/>



## THREE AREAS WITH A STRONG CASE FOR PROTECTION

In the report, we present and highlight three areas of the High Seas. These are strong candidates for rapid consideration as protected areas at the first COP.

- [Emperor Seamounts of the North Pacific](#)
- [Sargasso Sea in the North Atlantic](#)
- [South Tasman Sea/Lord Howe Rise in the southern hemisphere](#)

**THREE AREAS OF THE HIGH SEAS ARE STRONG CANDIDATES FOR RAPID CONSIDERATION AS PROTECTED AREAS UNDER THE TREATY: EMPEROR SEAMOUNTS OF THE NORTH PACIFIC, SARGASSO SEA IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC AND SOUTH TASMAN SEA/LORD HOWE RISE IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.**

All are exceptionally important for wildlife and home to many rare and declining species, often only found there. All have experienced severe historic and ongoing impact from global fishing fleets. They are experiencing rapid and disruptive climate change and are threatened by emerging activities. Each has also been of long-term conservation interest and scientific study. The three sites were included in both 2006 and 2019 Greenpeace International proposals. They have gained many advocates and supporters among scientists, conservationists, citizens and at high political levels.

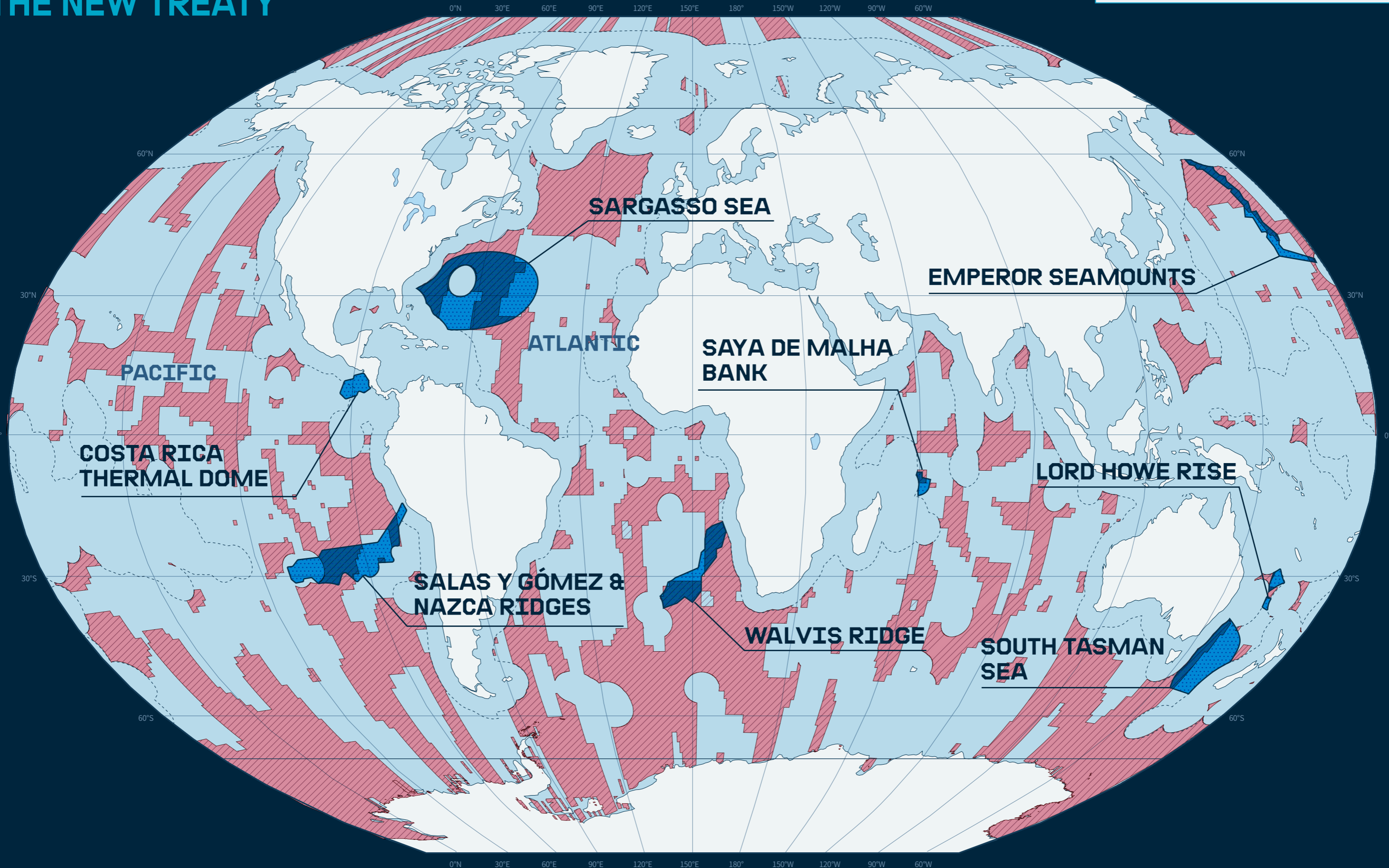


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Humpback whale in the Great Barrier Reef

# MAP OF SUGGESTED PRIORITY AREAS TO PROTECT UNDER THE NEW TREATY

-  HSA PRIORITY AREAS
-  30 BY 30 PROPOSALS
-  EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC



## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR OCEAN PROTECTION STARTS NOW

To make good on these and other proposals quickly, efforts must also begin now to build the executive functions of the Treaty. They include establishing:

- a **Conference of the Parties**
- a **Scientific and Technical Body, and other subsidiary bodies of the Conference of the Parties**
- a **Clearing-House Mechanism**
- a **secretariat**

Greenpeace International supports proposals for establishing a Preparatory Commission now to support the early implementation of the Treaty.

The Commission would be funded by the regular budget of the UN and operate under the Intergovernmental Conference's rules of procedure. It could draft key documents, agendas, rules of procedure, financial regulations etc. to lay the groundwork for how the agreement and its subsidiary bodies function. Without it, we risk delaying implementation of the Treaty by wasting time at the first COP, and probably following COPs, sorting out these items.

Protected areas are not the only urgent action required ahead of ratification of the Global Ocean Treaty. Right now, there is very little standing between the natural wonders of the deep ocean and mining machines. While more governments are stepping up efforts to stop deep sea mining before it begins, a handful of countries support this potentially calamitous industry. The impacts of mining would be severe, pervasive, enduring and irreversible, as concluded by the world's academic bodies. Hot on the heels of this historic Global Ocean Treaty, it is time for the world community to unite around a moratorium on deep sea mining to send a clear signal, that the era of ocean destruction is over – and the one of ocean protection has begun.



Fish among Sargassum Seaweed in the Sargasso Sea

© Shane Gross / Greenpeace



© Marten van Dijk / Greenpeace

Greenpeace International activists paint the word 'RISK!' on the side of a vessel chartered by a deep sea mining company. The Rainbow Warrior was in the Clarion Clipperton Zone to bear witness to the deep sea mining industry.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Global Ocean Treaty is a powerful tool. Once implemented, governments can use it to establish ocean sanctuaries on the High Seas, covering at least 30% of the ocean. But time is running out to meet the 30x30 goal and ocean threats are multiplying. States must capitalise on the growing momentum for ocean protection and act with haste.

- At least 60 countries must sign when the Global Ocean Treaty opens for signatures at the United Nations General Assembly on the 20th September 2023. Although non-binding, a signature sends a strong signal of intent to ratify and demonstrates determination to see the Treaty enter into force.
- At least 60 countries must ratify the Treaty so it enters into force by the UN Oceans Conference in June 2025 and the Agreement becomes an international law. Governments must continue to prioritise ocean protection by ratifying rapidly. They cannot be allowed to sit back now the Treaty has been adopted; civil society must continue to hold politicians to account.
- The United Nations must set up a Preparatory Commission by the end of 2023. A number of key decisions, including rules of procedure, financial regulations and size, terms of reference and modalities of subsidiary bodies must be made at the first BBNJ COP. Without preparatory work in advance, such as early drafts and consultations, a lot of time will likely be wasted at the first, and potentially following COPs. This would delay full implementation of the Treaty, establishment of MPAs and ultimately progress towards the 30x30 goal. A Preparatory Commission can do this work to ensure the first COP can hit the ground running.
- The Preparatory Commission must set up a CBTT working group, to assess national and regional capacity needs and priorities. This will help ensure the agreement delivers on promised support for developing countries, through capacity building and the transfer of marine technology. This is vital for equitable implementation of the Treaty, and will empower all states to realise their rights and develop, implement, monitor and manage future High Seas MPAs.
- A financial mechanism must be set up to facilitate successful implementation of the Treaty. Without sufficient funding, the Treaty COP cannot successfully function. The Preparatory Commission should set up a working group on finance to begin securing funding.<sup>5</sup>
- States, regional groups and other institutions must mobilise funding to facilitate successful implementation of the Treaty. The European Union's Global Ocean Programme commitment of 40 million € must be followed by similar pledges from others.
- States must begin formulating High Seas MPA proposals, so that at least 3 proposals are submitted at the first BBNJ COP. Champion governments need to begin writing proposals, building political support and consulting stakeholders as soon as possible taking a 'twin track' approach alongside ratification. They cannot afford to delay this work until the Treaty has entered into force, otherwise the first COP cannot advance protection and the 30x30 goal risks being missed. Civil society has a critical role to play in keeping political ambition high, using multiple levers from supporting research through to mobilising public support
- States must introduce a moratorium on deep sea mining. Deep sea mining is incompatible with a sustainable future. To prevent the unavoidable and irreversible harm that deep sea mining would cause, governments should ensure that deep sea mining does not start anywhere across the global oceans – including outside of ocean sanctuaries. To do this, alongside ratifying the Global Ocean Treaty, governments should work together at the International Seabed Authority Assembly to pass a general policy on a moratorium. As of August 2023, over 20 governments from the Pacific, Latin America and Europe support introducing a moratorium or a precautionary pause on deep sea mining and are actively coordinating to achieve this at the International Seabed Authority in the coming years.



© Tui De Roy / Minden / naturepl.com

Galapagos Sea Lion hunting fish, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

<sup>5</sup> IDDR (2023). Initial reflections to support rapid, effective and equitable implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. Policy Brief February 2023. <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/policy-brief/initial-reflections-support-rapid-effective-and-equitable>



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## FROM GLOBAL OCEAN TREATY TO PROTECTION AT SEA

The High Seas cover 61% of the world's oceans and occupy 70% of the living space on our planet, including land and sea. These international waters are home to a stunning wealth of marine life and ecosystems. They are crucial to many of the key processes that sustain life on our blue planet, including mitigating climate change.

But in recent decades life in the High Seas has dwindled under the rising impact of multiple human stresses, prompting the United Nations to begin a process to reform management in international waters. In March 2023, history was made when the UN finally agreed on a new Global Ocean Treaty. This Treaty is a powerful tool that can help protect at least 30% of the oceans by 2030.

Time is running out, and reaching this target will require a strong and urgent political response. This report offers clear routes to action to get across the finishing line and help the oceans thrive again.