

**BELMOPAN PLAN OF ACTION:  
ON PROTECTING THE OCEANS AS A SOURCE OF LIVELIHOODS**

We, the Members of Parliament from 27 countries from all regions of the world participating in the *Second International Parliamentary Oceans Day coinciding with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action* (PGA), at the end of the deliberations hosted virtually by the Parliament of Belize, on 17 December 2021, on the topic of “*The Role of Parliamentarians in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 - Protecting the Oceans,*”

***Express gratitude*** to the Parliament of Belize for hosting this Annual Forum, as well as to funders and partners that made this Forum possible;

***Recognize*** that these deliberations took place within the framework of PGA’s action-driven and results-oriented Campaign for the Protection of the Oceans; and, therefore, adopt the following Plan of Action:

**On Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.**<sup>1</sup>

***Recalling*** the commitments made in the 2019 [Praia Plan of Action](#) for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14;

***Recognizing*** the efforts made towards these goals, despite the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

***Affirming*** that the scientific community has emphasized that protecting at least 30 percent of the oceans’ area by 2030 is the minimum needed to maintain ocean health and critical ecosystem services provided by a living ocean, including food security, climate resilience, and biodiversity. We recognize that a well-connected network of representative and effectively-managed marine protected areas (particularly highly and fully-protected and conserved large-scale marine protected areas, spanning both national waters and the high seas) is needed to meet the standards scientists recommend for protecting at least 30 percent of the ocean over the next decade. Many of these areas have demonstrated benefits such as safeguarding biodiversity, increasing the resilience of the marine environment in a changing climate, and promoting human well-being by prioritizing social equity.

***Proclaiming*** our commitment of taking concrete action towards the achievement of the 30 percent goal by contributing to new protections, inviting new countries to support this crucial target, and underscore the importance of incorporating this goal into the UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s Global Biodiversity Framework and operationalizing it over the next decade.

***Affirming*** that to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of the global ocean it is crucial to have a strong high seas treaty to protect biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. Hence, we urge the successful completion of negotiations to finalize the treaty in the short term and commit to support its eventual ratification.

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<sup>1</sup> [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 in full available here](#)

**Acknowledging** that SDG 14.4, which sets the target to end overfishing and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing by 2020, has not been met.

**Recalling** the 2021 United Nations Second World Assessment which acknowledges that "*Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing remains one of the greatest threats to sustainable fisheries and a global challenge*".

**Recognizing** that the ratification and implementation of the Food & Agriculture Organization's Port State Measures Agreement, the International Labor Organization's Work in Fishing Convention C188 and the International Maritime Organization's Cape Town Agreement for the safety of fishing vessels are crucial to addressing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

**Realizing** that, when implemented together, these treaties can ensure a coordinated action to end Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing by ensuring that fish are legally caught from net to port, fishers enjoy decent working conditions and fishers' lives at sea are protected. Besides, these three treaties thwart the many human rights abuses related to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing including, but not limited to, threats to food security and livelihoods, human trafficking, enslavement, horrific labor conditions, and forced migration.

**Further acknowledging** the commitments made by States in the International Maritime Organization's Torremolinos Declaration to ratify the Cape Town Agreement by October 2022, for the 10th anniversary of its adoption by the International Maritime Organization.

**Acknowledging** that small-scale fisheries, which serve as a critical source of livelihood and development for communities and island nations across the globe, increasingly are threatened by the effects of illegal fishing and increasing fishing pressure due to its mostly open access regime. We recognize that small-scale fisheries support economies, provide food security, and overwhelmingly employ women in fishery processing.

**Recognizing** that UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans includes Target 14.1 regarding the prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution of all kinds, "in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution."<sup>2</sup> We further recognize the Indicator for Target 14.1 includes the density of floating plastic debris.

**Recognizing** the immense value of "blue carbon" coastal wetlands – mangroves, seagrasses and saltmarshes - and coral reefs in protecting coastal communities from the effects of climate change by stabilizing shorelines, buffering storms, and sequestering carbon.

**Acknowledging** these habitats are extremely threatened, with half of the world's mangroves destroyed within the last 50 years, and one-third of coral reefs destroyed in recent decades.

**Acknowledging** the scientific community's call for extreme caution, considering the inevitable and likely irreversible biodiversity loss if deep-sea mining is permitted.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.savethehighseas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DSCC\\_FactSheet1\\_DSM\\_intro\\_2pp\\_web.pdf](http://www.savethehighseas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DSCC_FactSheet1_DSM_intro_2pp_web.pdf)

**Recognizing** the deep-sea ecosystem is already challenged by multiple environmental stressors from the impacts of climate change, pollutants, and plastics, which have created acidification, warming, deoxygenation and reduced supply of nutrients from surface waters. The scientific community, civil society, fishing industry, and politicians have raised concerns that the risks associated with further damaging the deep-sea outweigh any potential net benefits for humankind.<sup>4</sup>

**We resolve to:**

***Protect coastal wetlands and coral reefs by:***

- Intensifying efforts to protect and restore these ecosystems through further highlighting the climate, ecosystem and intrinsic benefits that coastal wetlands and coral reefs bring in helping vulnerable coastal communities to adapt to changing climate by stabilizing shorelines and serving as a buffer from natural disasters.
- Calling for the recognition of coastal wetlands and coral reefs in the process of adopting legislation to address climate change, sustainable development, and disaster relief.

***Promote ratification and implementation of the International Maritime Organization's Cape Town Agreement by:***

- Engaging with our colleagues from all political affiliations and our governments to achieve multi-partisan consensus on the need to ratify the Cape Town Agreement by October 2022 and achieve coordinated implementation of the International Maritime Organization's Cape Town Agreement, the Food & Agriculture Organization's Port State Measures Agreement, and the International Labor Organization's Work in Fishing Convention;
- Intensifying our efforts to end Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing and its associated human rights violations by making it a priority in our parliamentary agendas and aligning our efforts to implement the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 14 (UN SDG 14).

***Build sustainability of small-scale fisheries as an essential source of livelihood and development by:***

- Promoting the adoption of legislation that recognizes, protects, sustains and empowers small-scale fisheries and the communities that rely on them as well as the implementation of the Food & Agriculture Organization Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries.
- Calling for the recognition of small-scale fisheries in the process of adopting legislation that aims to end Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, including issues of marine biodiversity, seafood processing, and safety and decent treatment of fishers and fish workers.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.savethehighseas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DSCC\\_FactSheet2\\_DSM\\_science\\_4pp\\_web.pdf](http://www.savethehighseas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DSCC_FactSheet2_DSM_science_4pp_web.pdf)

***Take action towards the protection and conservation of at least 30% of the ocean by 2030 by:***

- Working diligently in proposing at national levels the creation of new Marine Protected Areas, particularly highly and fully large-scale Marine Protected Areas and other effective area-based conservation measures which offer the same safeguards and benefits; supporting the incorporation of the 30 percent goal to international instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity; and facilitating the timely entry into force of a strong high seas treaty (biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction) through ratification.

***Combat marine litter by:***

- Intensifying our efforts to reduce single-use plastics in both our capacities as representatives of our constituencies and as lawmakers.
- Informing our constituencies, stakeholders, governments, and parliamentary colleagues of the urgency to prioritize the reduction of marine litter made of plastics.
- Calling for increased accountability for responsible consumption and production of plastics, including measures to address sources of microplastic, virgin plastic, overpackaging and avoidable plastic use.

***Prevent the degradation of a new frontier, the deep-seabed, by:***

- Calling for a moratorium on deep-sea mining by the International Seabed Authority until sufficient scientific research has been conducted to assess whether deep-sea mining can be done without damage to this common heritage of humankind, and until the International Seabed Authority Member States have undertaken organizational reforms to ensure transparency and effective decision-making in the International Seabed Authority's obligation to act on behalf of humankind as a whole.

***We, members of Parliamentarians for Global Actions and participants of the Second International Parliamentary Oceans Day, hereby commit*** to work towards these goals with our combined actions and to report back to the PGA Secretariat within three months of passing this declaration.