



The Victoria Plan of Action

I. On Protecting the Oceans for All People of Present and Future Generations

We, the Members of Parliament from 35 countries from all regions of the world, participating in the 44th Annual Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) hosted virtually by the National Assembly of Seychelles on 15 and 16 November 2023 on the topics of the “*Third Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians for the Oceans (CAP-Oceans) The UN High Seas Treaty: A Historic Milestone in Ocean Protection for All People of Present & Future Generations*” and “*Securing Democracy in a Digital Age: Launch of the Parliamentary Toolbox for Democracy Defense and Protecting Women Parliamentarians in the face of Cyberattacks*.”

Express gratitude to the National Assembly of Seychelles 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.

Recalling the commitments made in the [2019 Praia Plan of Action](#) and the [2021 Belmopan Plan of Action](#) for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14;

Recognizing the inextricable link between the health of our ocean and the health of our planet, and therefore directly to the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment;

Affirming that marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) comprise nearly two-thirds of the world’s ocean and provide incalculable ecological, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and food security benefits, belonging to all people as the common heritage of humankind;

Acknowledging the scientific community’s call for extreme caution, considering the inevitable and likely irreversible biodiversity loss if deep-sea bed mining is permitted.

Affirming that the scientific community has emphasized that protecting at least 30 percent of the oceans 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.

Recognizing that UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans includes Target 14.c. to “enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources.”

Affirming that to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of the global ocean, it is crucial to ensure the timely entry into force of the UN High Seas Treaty¹ to protect marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction;

We resolve to:

Promote ratification and implementation of the High Seas Treaty under UNCLOS by:

- Engaging with our colleagues from all political affiliations and our governments to achieve multi-partisan consensus on the need to urgently ratify the UN High Seas Treaty, reinforcing both the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), which includes the commitment to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of our planet’s ocean areas by 2030.
- Ensuring the Treaty establishes a robust framework for the creation of marine protected areas on the high seas and guides decision-makers on how to assess the environmental impacts of human activities in these areas.
- Facilitating the Treaty’s timely entry into force with 60 ratifications by the June 2025 UN Ocean Conference co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, with parliamentarians playing a key role in promoting and protecting human rights for all people of present and future generations to build resilience in the face of the climate crisis, maintain essential biodiversity, and to support the air we breathe.

II. On Securing Democracy in a Digital Age and Protecting Women Parliamentarians in the face of Cyberattacks.

Acknowledging that increasing consensus holds that democracy has been in decline globally for over 15 years.

Recalling that elements of democratic backsliding include the rising perpetuation of disinformation, the incremental dismantling of protections for press freedoms, and the weaponization of the media.

¹ The High Seas Treaty is also called the BBNJ Agreement, for its official title, 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

Recognizing that vulnerable populations and minorities, as well as opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders, and legal professionals, are at the forefront of the fight for stronger democratic institutions and principles.

Recognizing that women parliamentarians face enormous challenges and are at an increased risk of being exposed to technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Consequently, it negatively impacts their physical and psychological well-being and limits the participation of women in politics, further increasing gender inequality.

Affirming that democracy, beyond elections, is a fundamental commitment to human rights and the well-being of our planet. There is an inextricable link between democracy and the protection of the most vulnerable, including indigenous communities, women, children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons. Members of Parliament play an essential role in achieving just, peaceful, sustainable, and inclusive societies by ensuring the participation of historically marginalized groups in politics.

Affirming that democracy is a process built on trust between the citizenry and its representatives.

We resolve to:

- Raise awareness in parliament when at-risk legislators and human rights defenders arise, including through concerted coordination with colleagues in other countries.
- Sign on to the non-binding [Global Parliamentary Code of Democratic Conduct](#) and/or abide by its provisions.
- Use and share with colleagues the Parliamentary Toolbox for Democracy Defense to ensure evidence-based legislation and policies.
- Support the establishment of a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Democracy.
- Ensure that our legislation and policies are robust, including implementing international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Raise greater awareness among our colleagues in our Parliaments on the disproportionate impact of cybercrime on women and, hence, the importance of improved levels of participation by female legislators in addressing these challenges.
- Encourage our governments to explore possibilities for accession and implementation, as applicable, to the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) and its two Additional Protocols.
- Inform relevant PGA staff of concrete steps we have taken within 3 months from the date of adoption of the Victoria Plan of Action.