



UN High Seas Treaty

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UN HIGH SEAS TREATY

aka BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement

For the first time, UN members have agreed on a unified (legally-binding) treaty to protect biodiversity in the high seas

High Seas (HS)

All the saltwater bodies across Earth that aren't part of territorial sea/internal waters of a state

Background of Treaty

Demand for an updated framework to protect marine life in the High Seas, is about 20 years-old

Need to Protect HS

- Only 1.2% of HSs are currently protected
- 10% of global marine species at risk of extinction
- High exploitation due to commercial fishing, mining, acidification, pollution

The last int'l agreement on ocean protection was UNCLOS signed in 1982

This treaty is the 3rd "implementing agreement" under UNCLOS

KEY FEATURES

- Create a new body to manage conservation of ocean life and establish marine protected areas in the high seas
- Estd. ground rules for conducting EIAs for commercial activities in oceans

KEY PLAYERS

EU, US, UK and China (in brokering the deal)

SIGNIFICANCE

- Achieving the 30x30 Target set at UN CBD COP15
- Legal protection of 2/3rd of the ocean (+ livelihoods of coastal communities)
- Comprehensive protection of endangered species/habitats on >40% of Earth's surface

ROADBLOCK

How to fairly share marine genetic resources (MGR) & eventual profits among developed/developing nations



Ocean ecosystems produce half the oxygen we breathe, represent 95% of the planet's biosphere and soak up CO₂ (world's largest carbon sink)

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