

The Blue Leaders Call for the Ocean

Today on ocean day during Climate COP26, we, the Blue Leaders are calling for immediate action to address the challenges our blue Planet faces. Additionally, our human activities, including those on or affecting the ocean, need to become climate neutral as soon as possible.

We are witnessing a major biodiversity crisis. All around the globe, plants, animals and entire ecosystems are disappearing at rates never before seen in human history. Scientists report that over a million species are now threatened with extinction.

Centuries of unsustainable anthropogenic activities including the emitting of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, overexploitation, pollution, habitat destruction, plastic waste, underwater noise and ecosystem degradation have shaken the biological foundations that support life in the ocean. These impacts have been dramatically accelerated by climate change.

As the global pandemic rages on, the international community has lost precious time to meet in person to agree on future actions. It is for this reason, that we must do everything we can with the capacities we have now to immediately implement actions to address these threats. We cannot wait.

The global ocean covers nearly two thirds of our planet and is home to the majority of Earth's biodiversity. It regulates the Earth's climate; produces the oxygen we breathe and provides billions of people with food and livelihoods, including through maritime transport. But the accumulating impacts of unsustainable human activity combined with dramatic changes to ocean chemistry and temperature as a result of climate change are affecting the ocean's ability to provide its life sustaining services. We have reached a critical tipping point and must act further to protect our Blue Planet.

To reverse the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, further urgent transformative actions are needed. Fortunately, the next year presents us with major opportunities to act.

We, the Blue Leaders urge our fellow Heads of State around the world to join us and seize these opportunities to protect the 'Blue Heart' of our planet by:

- 1) **Establishing a new global target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 through a network of highly and fully protected marine areas** at the meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and
1. **Rapidly concluding a robust new United Nations treaty to conserve and protect marine biodiversity in the ocean beyond national jurisdiction.** The new treaty should provide for rapid designation and implementation of highly and fully protected marine areas on the high seas and modernize and strengthen assessment and management of human activities outside these protected areas to prevent significant adverse impacts.

* The Blue Leaders are an ambitious group of countries calling for action in 2021 to save our global ocean. The Blue Leaders are committed to securing a new international target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean through a global network of highly and fully protected marine areas by 2030 ("30x30") and the successful negotiation of a strong new UN High Seas Treaty. These two actions will give the ocean a fighting chance as we face unprecedented climate and biodiversity crises. For more information: theblueleaders.org