



Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the BBNJ Agreement (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction):

Exploring issues for the Caribbean Importance of Marine Protected Areas

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have been recognised as an important tool for biodiversity conservation since ecologically connected networks of MPAs are essential for conserving ecosystems in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) whilst also increasing their resilience to climate change. Well-designed and well-managed MPAs are especially effective at conserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem stability and improving ecosystem resilience by eliminating other stresses. The benefits are substantially enhanced when MPAs are larger, isolated and well-managed and monitored.

Relevance of the BBNJ Agreement to Marine Protected Areas

Currently, less than 1% of ABNJ are protected, but scientific evidence suggests that 30% of the world's ocean need to be protected and MPAs and reserves in ABNJ can play an integral role in achieving this target. Currently, States have no mechanisms to establish comprehensive and globally recognised MPAs and reserves within ABNJ. Instead there are several fragmented bodies that have the ability to set policies for specific activities or areas of the ocean but lack the legal mandate to enforce policies to conserve biodiversity across an entire ecosystem.

Currently, there are 12 MPAs in ABNJ, however research is ongoing to identify additional priority areas, including the Sargasso Sea which is adjacent to the Caribbean. These new areas should be based on the best available science whilst being coherent, representative, and consistent with international legislation and policies. Globally, various strategies have been developed for identifying priority areas, however compromise and cooperation is necessary in order to resolve conflicts of competing interests.



Priorities for negotiation

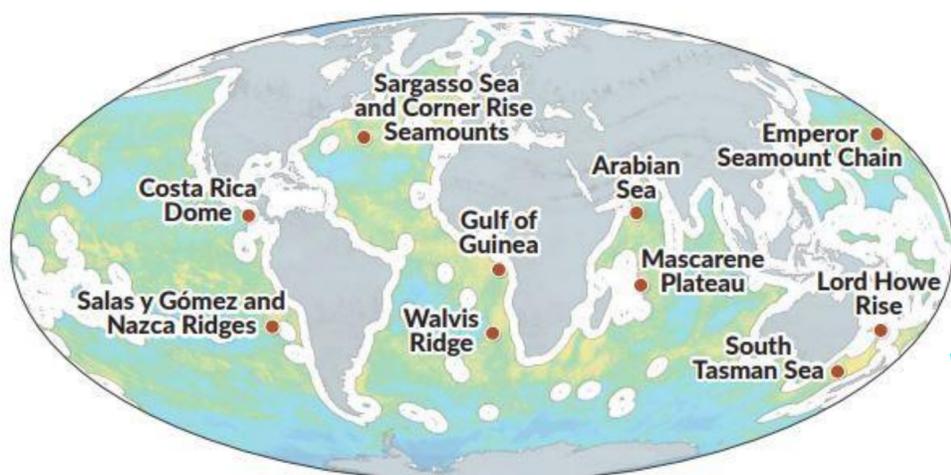
The BBNJ Agreement should develop a mechanism to identify and designate MPAs and marine reserves on the high seas. To ensure effectiveness, this mechanism should: enlist science-based criteria for assessing potential MPAs; develop a framework to adopt objectives and enforceable management plans whilst ensuring there are substantial opportunities for stakeholder engagement as well as collaboration with existing organisations. Furthermore, MPAs that protect biodiversity in both the water column and the seafloor should be encouraged as this ensures that linkages amongst species and ecosystems are conserved. The Agreement should also provide a legal framework through which States can establish MPAs in ABNJ with meaningful conservation objectives and enforceable management measures.



The Way Forward ▶▶

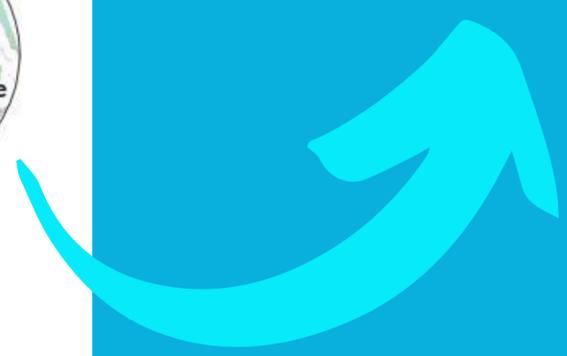
The BBNJ Agreement can be viewed as a means to facilitate the development of MPAs in ABNJ. This not only will protect marine biodiversity but can also assist governments to achieve their commitment to protecting more of our ocean which provides numerous critical services to humankind.

Special Places in the High Seas Span the World's Oceans and Regions
Areas with high concentrations of conservation features worthy of protection



Sources: UCSB analysis; Marineregions.org; Natural Earth
© 2020 The Pew Charitable Trusts

Studies have been done to identify areas important for biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), including the Sargasso Sea near to the Caribbean.



What happens in international waters affects all of us –

CARICOM stakeholders from government, private sector, communities, civil society, academia and regional agencies have rights, responsibilities and interests in the sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in international waters.

Get more information: <https://www.un.org/bbnj/>

Get involved! Contact CANARI: info@canari.org



Special thanks to the Oak Foundation for support to CANARI to assist CARICOM negotiators with engagement of CARICOM stakeholders.