



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



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Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP
Minister for Development and Africa

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 020 7008 5000

Email:
fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

Richard Fuller MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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6th November 2023

My Dear Richard,

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 October to the Department for Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs about 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 (BBNJ Agreement, also referred to as the High Seas Treaty), on behalf of your constituents. This correspondence has been forwarded to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for response. I am replying as the Minister responsible for ocean policy.

The BBNJ Agreement is a major victory for ocean protection and multilateral diplomacy and underpins the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as the cornerstone of ocean governance. The Agreement means much greater protection for the two-thirds of the global ocean that lies beyond national jurisdiction. It will play a key role supporting the delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including helping to achieve the target to effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of the ocean by 2030.

The UK played a significant and proactive role in achieving this success in over 10 years of negotiations and was pleased to be one of the first countries to sign the Agreement at the UN when it opened for signature on 20 September this year. The Agreement was laid before the UK Parliament for scrutiny on 16 October 2023 and work is in hand on the legislation and other measures needed before the UK can ratify.

60 States or regional economic integration organisations must become party to the Agreement before it enters into force. The UK will continue to be proactive in preparing for the implementation and entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement and supporting other, particularly developing, countries, to do so.

The UK has provided a significant contribution to the BBNJ Voluntary Trust Fund to enable participation by developing countries in UN discussions on preparatory work. The UK also continues to support the BBNJ Informal Dialogues, discussions that regularly bring together more than 100 participants from a wide range of countries online to discuss implementation issues. The UK is a member of the Advisory Committee for these Dialogues as well as providing funding.

The UK will continue to pursue opportunities to engage bilateral and regional partners to share best practice and support the implementation and ratification of the BBNJ Agreement. One upcoming example is co-funding and organising a regional workshop for ASEAN countries in the Philippines on 15-17 November.

With every good wish,
Yours ever
Andrew

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