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Press release

UK pushes protections for international marine biodiversity

The UK Government has today reaffirmed its commitment as a leader on international nature conservation at the UN General Assembly.

From: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs \(/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs\)](#), [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office\)](#), [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon \(/government/people/lord-ahmad-of-wimbledon\)](#), and [The Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP \(/government/people/therese-coffey\)](#)

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The UK Government has today reaffirmed its commitment as a leader on international nature conservation, with a package of measures to address pressing challenges such as biodiversity loss, marine protection, climate change and illegal fishing.

The announcements made at the UN General Assembly in New York this week by Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey and Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad will build on the work that the UK has already done on the international stage to put nature and the environment at the top of the international agenda.

This includes playing a leading role in negotiating and securing the new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) at the UN Biodiversity Summit in Montreal, which contains targets and goals to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

To help protect marine life in the high seas, the UK will be one of the first signatories of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, which will help establish large-scale marine protected areas in the two-thirds of the global ocean that lie beyond national jurisdiction.

The UK will also sign the Ocean Conservation Pledge, building on our existing commitments to protect at least 30% of our own marine area by 2030, and has endorsed the High-Level Panel Leader's Communiqué, urging ocean-based action across climate, fisheries, pollution, management and mobilising finance.

Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey said:

- “ It is vital that we maintain the momentum of the UN Biodiversity Conference last year and focus on implementation.
- “ Today’s announcements will help to tackle biodiversity loss at sea and on land, and I urge more nations to join us as we drive forward progress on this global mission ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.”

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the United Nations at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, said:

- “ I look forward to signing the BBNJ Agreement at the United Nation’s General Assembly and making the UK one of the first signatories. This agreement is a major victory for ocean protection and multilateral diplomacy and underpins the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea as the cornerstone of ocean governance.
- “ The UK played an important role in the negotiations and will continue to be proactive in preparing for implementation and entry into force and supporting other, particularly developing, countries, to do so.”

In addition, the UK government has pledged funding to support marine protection, ocean research and activities to combat illegal fishing. These investments will bolster initiatives aimed at conserving our oceans and ensuring their long-term sustainability by allocating resources to these critical areas.

And on Thursday, the Environment Secretary will chair the first-ever Commonwealth Environment and Climate Ministerial Meeting in the margins of UNGA, looking to strengthen collaboration between Commonwealth countries ahead of UNFCCC CoP28.

As part of the full package of measures to drive forward international progress on tackling biodiversity loss in the ocean and on land, the UK Government has also announced:

- £2.5 million to support the Joint Analytical Cell (JAC), which is a crucial initiative aimed at combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This substantial financial backing underscores the UK's commitment to safeguarding marine ecosystems and promoting sustainable fishing practices.
- £120,000 in funding to Plymouth Marine Laboratory as the secretariat for the Ocean Acidification Research for Sustainability (OARS) programme. Ocean acidification poses a significant threat to marine ecosystems, and this funding will contribute to efforts aimed at monitoring, mitigating, and adapting to this critical issue.
- A commitment to fund a project focused on the development of potential area-based management tools (ABMTs), such as Marine Protected Areas, in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This initiative aligns with efforts, such as the BBNJ Agreement, to enhance the conservation and sustainable management of marine areas of the global ocean, addressing a critical aspect of marine protection and sustainability. This project will draw on the important work that existing organisations have already carried out and recognise the need to collaborate closely with countries in regions where such proposals are to be developed.
- That it has welcomed Costa Rica, Panama, and Peru joining the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), a programme funded by the UK's Blue Planet Fund that supports countries in their ambitions to reduce plastic pollution.

In addition, the UK is resolutely focused on delivering the target to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 through a number of different actions such as welcoming the final Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) risk assessment framework, contributing £10 million towards the GBF fund and actively establishing both Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) within UK waters.

More information on how the UK is focused on achieving the target to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030:

- The UK has welcomed the final Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) risk assessment framework, which was launched on 18 September in New York, and encourages all UK businesses and financial institutions across sectors to engage with the TNFD's framework and consider getting involved in the work of the UK's TNFD National Consultation Group. The TNFD is an invaluable tool for redirecting financial flows towards nature positive outcomes.
- The UK is contributing £10 million towards the GBF fund. This contribution serves as a testament to the UK's recognition of the interconnectedness of global ecosystems and the importance of collective action.
- On the domestic front, the UK has been actively establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) within its own waters. This effort is a vital component of the UK's broader strategy to safeguard marine biodiversity and promote sustainable fisheries. These designated areas serve as havens for marine life, allowing ecosystems to thrive and regenerate while also contributing to broader conservation objectives.
- Furthermore, the UK is actively engaged in international efforts to protect critical ecosystems, such as mangroves. The commitment to the High-Level Climate Champions Mangrove Breakthrough target to mobilize \$4 billion in funding to revitalise mangroves highlights the UK's recognition of the vital role these coastal ecosystems play in carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience.
- The UK has also committed to spending at least £3 billion on climate solutions which will focus specifically on the intrinsic connection between climate change and biodiversity loss. By investing in climate solutions that prioritise nature, the UK aims to address both environmental crises

simultaneously, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for both our ecosystems and our communities.

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