



**REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REGIONAL INTEGRATION
AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

STATEMENT

BY

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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF 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)**

17 JANUARY 2026

Statement

A New Beginning for Ocean Conservation

Today, the 17th of January 2026, history is written upon the oceans. It is with a profound sense of national pride that I welcome the entry into force of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction formally known as the BBNJ Agreement. The BBNJ provides for the protection of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in high seas. Through the establishment of MPAs in the high seas, the BBNJ will regulate the sustainable exploitation of marine resources for the development of a viable blue economy which is of high importance to all Small Island Developing States (SIDS), particularly Mauritius.

This day also marks the end of the era of the "unregulated high seas" and heralds the beginning of a new chapter in global governance, one which is founded on international law, equity, and our shared responsibility to the planet.

Mauritius advocates for a science-driven, country-led approach to identifying these sanctuaries. We hold that protecting vital ecosystems in international waters acts as a "bank" for biodiversity that will replenish our own Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ), securing our fisheries and tourism sectors for the long term.

A Victory for Africa and the Global South

The path to this moment was forged by the unwavering solidarity of the Global South. For decades, Africa and SIDS have championed the principle that the resources of the deep ocean are the Common Heritage of Humankind.

Now, through this Agreement, we have enshrined a system where marine genetic resources and the knowledge derived from them must be shared equitably. This is a victory of our diplomacy and a concrete realisation of our vision for a just international order.

Mauritius: Leadership in the Bureau

For Mauritius, our role extends far beyond ratification. We are not merely observers of this process. Since the start of the process, Mauritius has been a key player, collectively crafting various provisions in the Agreement, notably through the African Group, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the G-77 and providing technical backstopping on key issues such as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) modalities of the Agreement.

Mauritius continues to serve with distinction as a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Commission, for the African Group. In this capacity, we are committed to driving the critical diplomatic work necessary to transform this legal text into a functioning global institution.

The implementation of such a vast instrument requires collective action. We cannot walk this path alone. I therefore call upon our steadfast partners, the United Nations family, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the broader international community, to rally behind developing nations. We need their continued technical and financial support to ensure that the promise of this Treaty translates into tangible reality for the Oceans.

Sovereignty and Stewardship

As a Big Ocean State, sovereign over an Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.3 million square kilometers, and with the historical recognition of our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago - which was the natural outcome of a long process anchored upon international law and statecraft, we understand that our national security is inextricably linked to the health of the high seas. Mauritius is working closely with the United Kingdom to establish the Chagos Archipelago Marine Protected Area (CAMPA), which would be one of the world's largest MPAs, driven by its people and science.

Future Steps

But we must also look to the economic horizon. The BBNJ Agreement opens new frontiers for a regenerative Blue Economy. It creates a legal framework for sectors that were previously out of reach, from marine biotechnology to deep-sea genetic research.

At the national level, as early as next Monday, my Ministry is organising a workshop in Mauritius, with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat, to take the critical step of domesticating the BBNJ Agreement. The outcome of this meeting will not only prepare us to deliver on the responsibilities imposed by the Agreement, but ready us to benefit from its provisions.

At the international level, the entry into force today is a promise kept to future generations and showcases a victory multilateralism. The work of implementation of this historic Agreement has only just begun.

Our focus now turns sharply to the Third Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) convening this March in New York. This upcoming session will be decisive. It is there that we will finalise the institutional architecture of the Treaty, ensuring that the funding mechanisms, the scientific bodies, and the capacity-building frameworks are not just robust on paper, but operational in practice, before the 1st Conference of Parties takes place.
