



**High Seas Alliance Opening Statement
BBNJ IGC3 Item 5 (spoken)**

19 August 2019

Thank you Madame President, I am honored to speak on behalf of the High Seas Alliance and its 40 member organizations, many of whom are represented here today, and collectively represent millions of people around the world concerned with the future of the high seas. We also align ourselves with the statement made by IUCN.

Madam President, we would like to express our appreciation and congratulate you on the Draft Text that you have so ably and timely provided, as it provides a strong basis to transition to text-based negotiations which are needed and critical at this juncture.

We would also like to thank your team and DOALOS for their continued hard work, and the Secretary General of this conference, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, for his dedicated leadership throughout the BBNJ process. And we are grateful to Bureau members and all States for the important contribution to transparency in opening the informal sessions to observers.

Madame President, distinguished delegates, and ocean friends, a recent landmark assessment by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has cautioned that the state of biodiversity and ecosystems of our planet is at its most perilous point in human history and the decline is accelerating. This assessment also recognized that highly protected and effectively implemented marine protected areas are one of the most effective tools to protect marine biodiversity. These leading scientists have pointed to the need for *transformative change*, and this BBNJ Agreement can be that transformative change for the ocean. This is a pivotal IGC session and with just two negotiating sessions left, we need to make tangible progress over these two weeks toward a historic Agreement and incorporate provisions that will legally protect the biodiversity in nearly 70% of the global ocean and almost half our planet.

Throughout the intersessional period, the High Seas Alliance has been inspired by governments and regional groupings through our work at numerous workshops that provided a forum for consideration of the President's text in preparation for this session of the IGC. Our key recommendations on the Draft Text following these consultations can be found in the back of the room and on our website.

Madame President, we give you and all delegations our full support, and we are confident that under your guidance, and with the constructive engagement by all, we will make the needed progress in this session that will pave the way to conclude a final agreement in 2020 to protect our beautiful blue Planet. Like Canada, we are also ready to go!! Thank you very much.

Thank you very much.