Regional Essay Competition

February 3, 2025 – March 5, 2025

“The Role of the High Seas Treaty in Protecting Our Ocean Future”

Objectives

The High Seas Alliance (HSA) is pleased to announce the launch of the 2025 Regional Essay Competition. This initiative seeks to engage youth and academic communities in the Caribbean to explore the significance of the high seas and the potential impact of the BBNJ Treaty on ocean protection. By encouraging students to think critically about ocean conservation, we aim to foster advocacy for the sustainable management of marine resources.

Background

The high seas, which constitute nearly two-thirds of the world's oceans, are a vital component of our planet's ecosystem, providing a habitat for marine life and regulating the Earth's climate. Despite their importance, the high seas remain largely unprotected, leaving them vulnerable to overexploitation, illegal fishing, pollution, and biodiversity loss. The lack of a comprehensive management framework has significant implications for marine ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

For the Caribbean region, where economies are deeply intertwined with the ocean, the health of the high seas is critically important. The Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) represents a historic opportunity to protect marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The BBNJ Treaty aims to establish marine protected areas (MPAs), ensure sustainable use of marine resources, and promote the sharing of marine genetic resources.

The aim is to inspire students to think critically about ocean protection and advocate for the sustainable management of marine resources.

1. Eligibility

- The competition is open to secondary and tertiary students residing and attending school in a Caribbean country.
- Participants must fit within one of two age categories:
    - Ages 12-17
    - Ages 18-25

2. Essay Requirements

- **Topic:** The Role of the High Seas Treaty in Protecting Our Ocean Future
- **Length:** Essays should be 800 - 1,000 words.
- **Language:** Essays must be written in English.

- **Format:** Essays should be typed, double-spaced, and use a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, 12-point font).
- **Originality:** Essays must be original works of the participant and must not have been previously published or submitted to other competitions.
- **References:** Proper citation of sources is required. Plagiarism will result in disqualification.

3. Submission Guidelines

- **Deadline:** All entries must be submitted by March 5, 2025.
- **Submission Method:** Participants should submit using the form on HSA's website.
- **File Format:** Essays should be submitted in PDF or Word format.
- **Participant Information:** Each submission must include the participant's name, age, school/university, and contact information.

4. Judging Criteria

Essays will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Score Allocation
Understanding of Topic	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the high seas, the BBNJ Treaty, and their relevance to the Caribbean.	20 points
Content and Arguments	Presents well-reasoned arguments, supported by relevant evidence and examples.	30 points
Originality and Creativity	Offers unique perspectives on the topic and proposes innovative solutions.	20 points
Organization and Structure	Clearly organized with a logical flow of ideas.	15 points
Language and Style	Uses clear and effective language, free from grammatical errors.	15 points
Total		100 points

5. Prizes

Prize *(Applies to both categories)*	Description
First Place	Laptop, HSA T-Shirt, and a certificate of achievement.
Second Place	Tablet, book grant and a certificate of achievement.
Third Place	Tablet and a certificate of achievement.
Honorable Mentions	Certificates of participation for outstanding entries.

6. Timeline

- **Launch Date:** February 3, 2025
- **Submission Deadline:** March 5, 2025
- **Judging Period:** March 7 - March 21, 2025
- **Announcement of Winners:** March 27, 2025

7. Judging Panel

The judging panel will consist of experts in marine conservation, economics, and education from the Caribbean region. Judges will be responsible for reviewing and scoring a proportion of the essays based on the outlined criteria.

Judge Name	Organization	Position
Christopher Corbin	United Nations Environment Programme	Coordinator, Cartagena Convention Secretariat
Professor Michael Taylor	University of the West Indies, Mona	Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology
Daniel Caceres	Sustainable Ocean Alliance	Regional Representative

Kemi Linton	Barbados Environmental Sustainability Fund	Chief Executive Officer
Asha-Gaye Cowell	Caribbean Biodiversity Fund	Conservation Finance Program Officer
Sean Russell	Director of Youth Engagement	EarthEcho International, Inc.
Ola Kuznia	High Seas Alliance	Program Officer

8. Dissemination Strategy

To ensure broad participation across the Caribbean, the HSA will partner with national ministries, schools, universities, and regional organizations. The following ministries will be contacted to assist with distributing competition materials to schools and youth networks:

- Ministry of Education and Youth (Jamaica)
- Ministry of Youth Development and National Service (Trinidad & Tobago)
- Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment (Barbados)
- Ministry of Economic Development, Planning, Agriculture and Lands, Forestry, Marine Resources, and Cooperatives (Grenada)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Blue and Green Economy (Dominica)
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Suriname)

Regional Partners will include:

- The University of the West Indies (UWI)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Caribbean Academy of Sciences
- EarthEcho International

9. Announcement of Winners and Communication

Winners will be announced on the HSA website, social media platforms, and through participating ministries and schools. The winning essays will be shared with key stakeholders, including government ministers and environmental agencies, to spotlight the voices of young people advocating for ocean protection. Select essays may also be presented at regional conferences and published in regional environmental journals.

10. Terms of Reference and Disclaimers

Terms of Reference (ToR):

1. *Objective:* To foster awareness and engagement in ocean conservation through student participation, promoting the role of the High Seas Treaty and sustainable marine management.
2. *Role of Participants:* Entrants will produce original essays examining the importance of the BBNJ Treaty and its relevance to the future of ocean conservation in the Caribbean region.
3. *Role of Judges:* The panel of experts will review all submissions, score the essays based on the outlined criteria, and ensure transparency and fairness in the selection process.

Disclaimers:

1. *Use of Essays:* By participating in this competition, entrants grant the HSA permission to use, publish, or promote the essays in educational and promotional materials, with appropriate credit to the authors.
2. *Copyright:* All submissions remain the intellectual property of the authors, but HSA reserves the right to feature essays in publications, on its website, or in promotional materials.
3. *Final Decision:* All decisions made by the judging panel are final, and no appeals will be entertained.
4. *Data Protection:* Personal information provided during the submission process will be used solely for the purpose of the competition and will not be shared with third parties without consent.
5. *Eligibility Confirmation:* Participants must meet the eligibility requirements stated in the guidelines, and any breach (such as plagiarism or false information) will result in immediate disqualification.
6. *Alterations to Competition:* HSA reserves the right to amend competition deadlines, judging periods, or rules in case of unforeseen circumstances, but will communicate such changes promptly to participants.