

Joint Statement to call for urgent actions for Marine Conservation to Mitigate Climate Change Impact

The climate crisis is intensifying threats to marine biodiversity and accelerating the degradation of marine ecosystems essential to human and planetary health. Yet, despite the urgency, current governmental efforts to protect marine environments remain insufficient. Recognizing the critical state of our oceans, we, civil society and environmental organizations from Asia including Japan and the Republic of Korea, and the High Seas Alliance, jointly call on our governments to take decisive, coordinated action.

In alignment with the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (K-M GBF) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which includes a target to protect 30% of terrestrial and marine areas by 2030, we urge our governments to take immediate steps to meet this goal.

Furthermore, we recognize the recently adopted Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) as a historic advancement for high-seas biodiversity conservation. We call on our governments to ratify the BBNJ Agreement without delay and to collaborate on establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the high seas, thus advancing the global "30 by 30" target.

This commitment is crucial for safeguarding biodiversity and strengthening the resilience of marine ecosystems essential to human well-being. Considering the Southern and Antarctic Ocean makes up about 10 percent of the global ocean, we emphasize the urgent need to expand MPAs around Antarctica. This unique ecosystem supports a vast range of marine species and is critical for global biodiversity and climate regulation. We call on our governments to actively support and advocate for the designation of additional MPAs in the Southern Ocean to protect these vulnerable habitats from climate change impacts and human activities such as fishing and resource extraction.

Together, we urge our governments to undertake the following actions:

1. **Expand Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** Establish and effectively manage MPAs to achieve the "30 by 30" global target, ensuring at least 30% of marine and coastal areas including large-scale MPAs by 2030.
2. **Enhance Regional Cooperation for Marine Conservation:** We urge increased cooperation among Asian countries through coordinated efforts across scientific, political, and civil society sectors to protect our shared marine ecosystems.
3. **Expedite Ratification and Implementation of the BBNJ Agreement:** High seas make up two-thirds of the global ocean and are pivotal to meeting the 30% MPA goal. Our governments should lead in the MPA designation process and commit to scientific research and management plans that ensure high-seas biodiversity protection.
4. **Support the Expansion of Antarctic MPAs:** Advocate for the protection of key areas in the Southern Ocean to preserve its unique and fragile ecosystems, which play a critical role in global biodiversity and mitigating climate change impact.

The "30 by 30" goal, coupled with the BBNJ Agreement and the expansion of Antarctic MPAs, provides an unprecedented opportunity to advance marine conservation and alleviate the climate change impact on our oceans. As civil society and environmental organizations united in this mission, we call on our governments to lead the way in protecting marine biodiversity and securing a sustainable future for marine ecosystems to be passed on to future generations.

List of signatories

Cheonnam Korean Federation for Environmental Movement,
Citizens' Institute for Environment Studies,
Citizen Ocean Science Research Team,
Climate Ocean Research Institute,
Eco Horizon Institute,
Environmental Justice Foundation,
Friends of Earth Japan,
Greenpeace East Asia,
Green Korea United,
High Seas Alliance,
Hot Pink Dolphins,
Incheon Korean Federation for Environmental Movement,
Jeju Ecotourism Association,
Jeju Korean Federation for Environmental Movement,
Korean Federation for Environmental Movement,
Marine Animal Research & Conservation,
Paran Citizen Ocean Science Center,
Sea Shepherd Korea,
The Nature Conservation Society of Japan

January 31, 2025