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Belgium welcomes the entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement

On 17 January 2026, the BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement will officially enter into force. Belgium welcomes this historic milestone. This Agreement is a crucial step forward in better protecting biodiversity in the high seas and providing sustainable solutions to the challenges facing the ocean.

The BBNJ Agreement is the result of nearly 20 years of diplomatic efforts in which Belgium has played a leading role. To date, 82 States, including Belgium, and the European Union have ratified the Agreement. This global effort, which has now led to the Agreement's entry into force, demonstrates a lasting confidence in the international legal order and multilateralism, two essential pillars of Belgian foreign policy.

More than 70% of our planet's surface is covered by water, three quarters of which is open sea, i.e. areas beyond national borders. These areas are vital for the climate, food supply and health of our planet, but they are also particularly vulnerable. Until now, there has been no legal framework to protect these areas. The BBNJ Agreement fills this gap by proposing clear international rules, encouraging scientific research and strengthening cooperation between countries.

Annelies Verlinden, Minister for Justice and the North Sea: "*The entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement marks a historic turning point for ocean protection. For the first time, countries are establishing clear rules to protect nature on the high seas, based on science and cooperation. Belgium remains firmly committed to this agreement, for our North Sea, for the ocean and for the future of our planet.*"

Belgium is particularly pleased with this entry into force and our country is a candidate to host the future BBNJ Secretariat.

Maxime Prévot, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation: "*In Brussels, the BBNJ Secretariat can be operational from day one: the offices are ready. The permanent presence of international actors and scientific and technical expertise also guarantees progress throughout the year, and not just at peak times such as COPs.*"

The entry into force is an important first step, but the work does not stop there. Belgium remains actively committed to the rapid and broad ratification of the BBNJ Agreement.

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