

26 Mar 2026 -14:14

Belgium presents its candidacy in New York to host the secretariat of the UN Ocean Treaty

On Monday 23 March 2026, the final preparations for the entry into force of the new UN Ocean Treaty began in New York. This is an important moment for Belgium, which will present its bid to host the secretariat of the new UN Ocean Treaty to the UN member states on 1 April 2026.

For two weeks, the various delegations from UN member states will work on the practical implementation of the UN Ocean Treaty, also known as the BBNJ Agreement (in full: International Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction). They will consider the rules of procedure, funding, cooperation with other organisations and the establishment of the secretariat. The first Conference of the Parties, the meeting of the highest decision-making body, will take place in January 2027.

On 1 April 2026, Minister for Justice and the North Sea Annelies Verlinden will present Belgium's bid to host the secretariat of the new UN Ocean Treaty to the UN member states. *"Belgium has played a pioneering role in the multilateral protection of the ocean for many years and is internationally recognised as a true bridge-builder, which makes us a credible partner. Furthermore, the secretariat in Brussels can get to work immediately at a fully operational location in the Residence Palace on Schuman Square. Brussels is a distinct diplomatic hub, with a rich ecosystem of international organisations, scientific institutions and embassies. Finally, civil society is given a strong and visible voice in our international policy. All these assets make Belgium a very strong candidate,"* explains Minister Verlinden.

"Belgium has been committed to this treaty for twenty years. We launched the Blue Leaders initiative, a coalition of pioneering countries that have set themselves the goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. We have advocated for an independent secretariat and were among the first to ratify the treaty. Today, we are bidding to host this secretariat in Brussels, where it will be operational from day one, at the heart of the world's largest diplomatic community. Two-thirds of the world's ocean finally have a legal framework. Now we must bring it to life," said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation, Maxime Prévot.

Belgium hopes that the negotiations in New York will lay a solid foundation for the UN Ocean Treaty. An Ocean Treaty that must live up to its ambitions and that all countries can help shape as equals. Strong cooperation with scientific institutions, civil society and other international organisations must provide guarantees for success.



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