



**His Excellency Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre**

**Prime minister of Norway**

cc:

**Bjørnar Selnes Skjæran,**

**Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy**

**Espen Barth Eide,**

**Minister of climate and environment**

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

This last year has put into sharp focus the extent to which we are all impacted by the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, including the increasing effects of climate change on our global ocean. Protecting the ocean is now more urgent than ever, particularly for coastal nations such as Norway, and it is for this reason that we are reaching out to you.

The High Seas Alliance, a partnership of over 45 global NGOs including Birdlife International, Greenpeace and IUCN, is working to protect our global ocean through a robust and legally binding high seas treaty. A treaty could help put an end to the harmful practices, like IUU fishing, currently being used to exploit the planet's natural resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction (our shared global commons). After nearly 20 years of discussions and negotiations at the United Nations (UN) and in world capitals, UN Member States are currently in the final stages of treaty negotiations, with the next and final slated session scheduled for March 2022. For this we need Norway's active support.

From the outset, Norway has always had an active role in these negotiations, that will potentially provide key governance solutions to ensure the protection of one of the last greatest global commons. The high seas cover half the planet, providing key planetary support functions, but they are under increasing pressures from extraction, pollution, and climate change. With only 1% of the high seas protected, we really need an ambitious treaty to provide the breadth of tools and flexibility for countries to properly manage these precious waters for future generations.

However, the Norwegian position throughout the negotiations seems more aligned with the least ambitious options under consideration with Norway more commonly siding with States favouring the least progressive positions.<sup>1</sup> This would appear inconsistent with your recent recommitment to Norway's continued work as co-chair for the Ocean Panel<sup>2</sup>.

More recently, Erna Solberg signed the Leader's Pledge for Nature<sup>3</sup> in September 2020, which acknowledged, that:

*"A transformative change is needed: we cannot simply carry on as before",*

the pledge goes on to commit signatories to:

*"...mainstream biodiversity into policies at all levels, including in key sectors such as . . . fisheries . . . and extractive industries ..."*

and finally commits to:

*"...conclude at the next Intergovernmental Conference the negotiations for an effective internationally legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction" (emphasis added).*

It remains unclear if this important commitment has had an impact on Norway's position on these negotiations.

With a new treaty to address high seas ocean governance on the horizon, now is the time to act and fulfil Norway's leadership on ocean issues, through:

- (i) Embracing a meaningful approach to stewardship of the high seas, putting the ecosystem approach and precautionary principle at the heart of Norway's position for the benefit of all of humankind for generations to come;
- (ii) reviewing its position accordingly and sending a message to fisheries and foreign affairs officials on the importance of Norway's stance; and
- (iii) re-committing Norway to the Leaders Pledge for Nature.

We believe your extensive leadership experience addressing ocean governance, as well as Norway's maritime history make you and Norway incredibly well-placed to be a champion for an ambitious high seas treaty. We have noted Norway's strong support of a target of protecting 30% of the global ocean by 2030, including acknowledging the role management of high seas could play in achieving this<sup>4</sup> and we would be honoured to have your support for the proposals above.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://enb.iisd.org/events/3rd-session-intergovernmental-conference-igc-conservation-and-sustainable-use-marine/summary>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/prime-minister-store-to-co-chair-international-ocean-panel/id2881655/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Leaders\\_Pledge\\_for\\_Nature\\_27.09.20-ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Leaders_Pledge_for_Nature_27.09.20-ENGLISH.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> «Area-based measures in areas outside national jurisdiction can also contribute to the implementation of the (CBD) goals». Translated excerpt from 3.3.2 in [Stortingsmelding 29 \(2020-21\) about Marine Protection](#).

Lastly, please find attached for your interest a copy of High Seas Alliance's brief entitled "[What Ambition Looks Like](#)" which highlights crucial elements vital for the high seas treaty to be truly transformative and effective.

We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work with your office and address any concerns or questions you may have.

Yours



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