

# Section 2: International Frameworks

We will explore the specific treaties governing global biodiversity, including UNCLOS, CBD, BBNJ, CMS, Ramsar, and UNESCO programs.



Module 1.3 - Introduction to Conservation Frameworks

Oceans



Biodiversity



Heritage

# Learning Objectives



## UNCLOS Zones & Duties

Explain **UNCLOS** maritime zones and the specific Part XII duties to protect and preserve the marine environment.



## BBNJ High Seas Treaty

Describe how the **2026 BBNJ Agreement** fills critical governance gaps for biodiversity in the high seas.



## CBD Evolution & Targets

Compare **CBD** evolution (PoWPA → Aichi → GBF) and analyze the current 2030 targets.



## CMS Transboundary Tools

Explain **CMS** tools and agreements for managing transboundary migratory species across jurisdictions.



## Ramsar & Blue Carbon

Identify **Ramsar's** 'Wise Use' principle and the relevance of wetlands for Blue Carbon storage.



## UNESCO MAB vs. WHC

Distinguish the distinct roles and management approaches of **UNESCO MAB** Biosphere Reserves versus **World Heritage** sites.

# International Frameworks at a Glance



| Framework                                                                                             | Primary Focus                             | Distinction / Key Features                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>UNCLOS</b>       | All Ocean Activities                      | 'Constitution for the Oceans'                   |
|  <b>BBNJ</b>         | Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction | High-seas MPAs, EIAs, MGRs, Capacity Building   |
|  <b>CBD</b>          | Global Biodiversity                       | GBF targets incl. 30x30 (Protect 30% by 2030)   |
|  <b>CMS</b>          | Migratory Species                         | Range State Agreements / MoUs                   |
|  <b>Ramsar</b>       | Wetlands                                  | 'Wise Use' Principle, Ramsar List               |
|  <b>UNESCO MAB</b> | People & Nature                           | Biosphere Reserves (Core/Buffer/Transition)     |
|  <b>UNESCO WHC</b> | Exceptional Sites                         | Protection of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) |

## Section 2: International Frameworks

# UNCLOS: The Constitution for the Oceans



## Rights vs. Duty

Balances sovereign rights to use marine resources with the fundamental duty to protect and preserve the ocean.



## Part XII: Environmental Mandate

Protect and preserve the marine environment

Prevent, reduce, and control pollution

Safeguard rare/fragile ecosystems & endangered species

Conduct marine scientific research responsibly



## Key Institutions

Specialized bodies for dispute resolution and implementation: **ITLOS** (Tribunal), **ISA** (Seabed Authority), **CLCS** (Continental Shelf Commission).



## Maritime Jurisdiction



### Internal Waters

Landward of baseline. Full state sovereignty (like land).



### Territorial Sea

Sovereignty extends here, subject to "innocent passage."

0-12 nm



### Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Sovereign rights over resources (fish, oil) & environment protection.

12-200 nm



### High Seas / 'The Area'

Beyond national jurisdiction. Common Heritage of Humankind.

200+ nm

## 2 Why it Matters for the Caribbean

### Small Islands, Large Ocean States

Caribbean SIDS often have EEZs many times larger than their landmass, creating vast management responsibilities.



### Economic Sovereignty

Control over fisheries stocks, seabed minerals, and energy potential within the 200nm limit is vital for development.



### Conservation Mandate

With rights come duties: UNCLOS mandates protection of the marine environment against pollution and degradation.



The Caribbean Sea is a semi-enclosed sea, requiring enhanced regional cooperation under UNCLOS.

# BBNJ (High Seas Treaty)



Entered into Force 17 Jan 2026

## Closing the Governance Gap

Addresses the 'regulatory vacuum' in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), bringing conservation rules to the final frontier of the ocean.

### Legally Binding Tools

Enables the creation of High Seas MPAs and mandatory Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for activities in international waters.

### Equity & Sharing

Ensures fair access and benefit-sharing for Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs), vital for developing nations and SIDS.

### Institutional Framework

Establishes a COP, Secretariat, Scientific & Technical Body, and Clearing-House Mechanism to oversee implementation.



# BBNJ: The Four Pillars (Tools)



| Pillar                                                                                                       | What it does                                               | Why it matters                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>ABMTs/MPAs</b>          | Establish protected areas on the high seas.                |  Delivers 30x30 for oceans      |
|  <b>MGRs &amp; DSI</b>      | Share benefits from discoveries (e.g., genetic resources). |  Equity for SIDS/Caribbean      |
|  <b>EIAs</b>                | Assess activities' impacts on the marine environment.      |  Prevent harm before it happens |
|  <b>Capacity &amp; Tech</b> | Provide data, tools, and training for all states.          |  Builds Caribbean capability    |

 These four elements form the "package deal" that allowed the BBNJ Agreement to be finalized, balancing conservation with sustainable use and equity.

# CBD: From PoWPA to GBF



04

## PoWPA (2004)

Programme of Work on Protected Areas: The first major push to build comprehensive global protected area networks on land and sea.

11

## Aichi Targets (2011-2020)

An ambitious strategic plan with 20 targets. While mostly not met, they set the foundation for current conservation metrics.

22

## GBF (2022-2030)

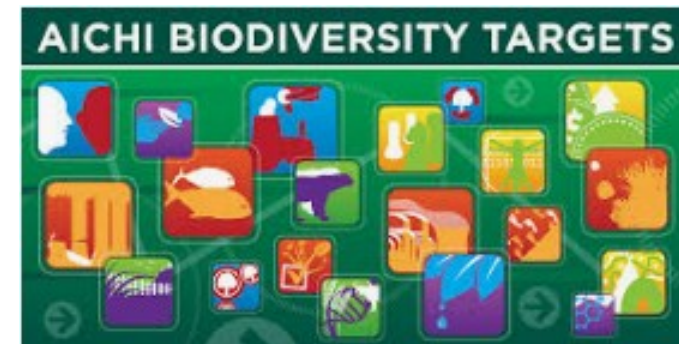
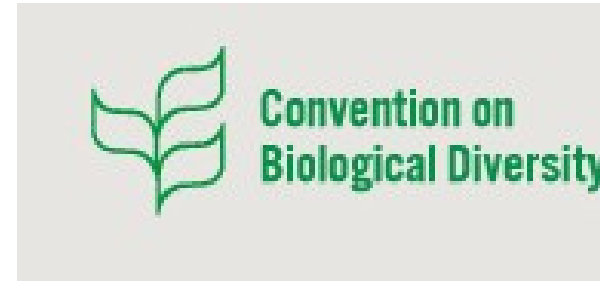
The 'Paris Agreement for Nature' containing 23 action targets, including the landmark Target 3 (30x30).

26

## New Mechanisms (2025/26)

**Cali Fund:** Benefit-sharing for DSI supporting IPLCs.

**COP17 Yerevan:** First comprehensive Global Stocktake of GBF progress.



# GBF 2030 Targets: What to Track



| Target                                                                                                          | Meaning                                    | Relevance                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Target 3 (30x30)</b>       | 30% effectively conserved land/sea.        |  Drives MPA expansion         |
|  <b>Target 2 (Restoration)</b> | 30% degraded ecosystems under restoration. |  Coral/mangrove rehab         |
|  <b>Target 19 (Finance)</b>    | \$200B/yr; \$30B int'l flows.              |  Mobilizes resources for SIDS |



*These targets are part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted in 2022 to guide global action through 2030.*

# CBD ↔ BBNJ: How They Connect

Section 2: International Frameworks



## CBD: The Ambition



### Global Targets

Sets the global agenda and aspirational goals, most notably the **30x30 target** (protecting 30% of the planet by 2030) under the GBF.



### Scientific Basis (EBSAs)

Identifies **Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)**. These scientific maps tell us *where* protection is most needed in the open ocean.

### "The What & Where"

Defining the destination



## BBNJ: The Machinery



### Legal Tools for MPAs

Provides the actual legal mechanism to designate and manage **High Seas Marine Protected Areas**. It turns the 30x30 ambition into binding reality.



### Impact Assessments (EIAs)

Mandates **Environmental Impact Assessments** for activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, ensuring new uses don't harm biodiversity.

### "The How"

Providing the vehicle

## Political Definition of Migration

Defined not just biologically, but by crossing jurisdictional boundaries. Cyclical and predictable movements across borders trigger protection.

## Protection Levels (Appendices)

### Appendix I

Endangered species requiring strict protection (prohibit taking).

### Appendix II

Unfavourable status requiring international cooperation.

## Flexible Legal Tools

Range State Agreements, MoUs (e.g., Sharks, Dugongs), and Concerted Actions allow tailored regional responses without full treaty ratification.

## Caribbean Relevance

Critical for managing shared populations of whales (humpbacks), dolphins, sea turtles, and seabirds across the wider region.



# Ramsar Convention: Wise Use of Wetlands



## Dedicated Treaty for Wetlands

The only global treaty focused on a single ecosystem type. The "Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance" designates critical sites for protection.

## The "Wise Use" Principle

Focuses on maintaining the ecological character of wetlands while allowing for sustainable human use and supporting local livelihoods.

## Blue Carbon Powerhouses

Mangroves and peatlands store vast amounts of carbon. Protecting Ramsar sites is a key component of many countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).



# UNESCO MAB vs World Heritage (WHC)



| Feature                                                                                               | MAB (Biosphere Reserves)                                  | World Heritage Convention                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Goal</b>         | Reconciling people and nature sustainability.             |  Preserving Outstanding Universal Value       |
|  <b>Human Role</b>   | Humans are central to the model (Core-Buffer-Transition). |  Often external (visitors/custodians)         |
|  <b>Legal Basis</b>  | Soft Law (Statutory Framework).                           |  Hard Law (1972 Convention)                   |
|  <b>2026 Updates</b> | Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan (2026–2035).               |  New Managing WHC manual; climate/communities |

 Both UNESCO programs operate globally but use different mechanisms: MAB focuses on sustainable living laboratories, while WHC protects sites of exceptional heritage value.

# 2026 Milestones Shaping Implementation



## BBNJ Enters into Force

Jan 17, 2026

The High Seas Treaty becomes operational, allowing for the designation of high-seas MPAs and mandating EIAs for activities beyond national jurisdiction.



## CBD COP17 (Yerevan)

Oct 2026

First Global Stocktake of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to assess progress toward the 30x30 target and other 2030 goals.



## UNESCO MAB Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan

2026-2035

New decade-long roadmap for Biosphere Reserves, focusing on their role as living laboratories for sustainable development and climate adaptation.



## WHC Managing World Heritage Manual

2026  
Release

Updated foundational manual introducing the Heritage Place Approach, integrating natural/cultural management and emphasizing community involvement.



## Cali Fund Operational

2026  
Active

Global fund launched to share benefits from Digital Sequence Information (DSI) on genetic resources, supporting Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.



UNESCO  
MAB

## **Seaflower Biosphere Reserve** Colombia

A massive marine Biosphere Reserve covering the San Andrés Archipelago. Demonstrates the MAB model where large marine areas balance strict core protection with sustainable artisanal fishing zones.

 **Framework Connection: Biosphere Reserve Zonation**

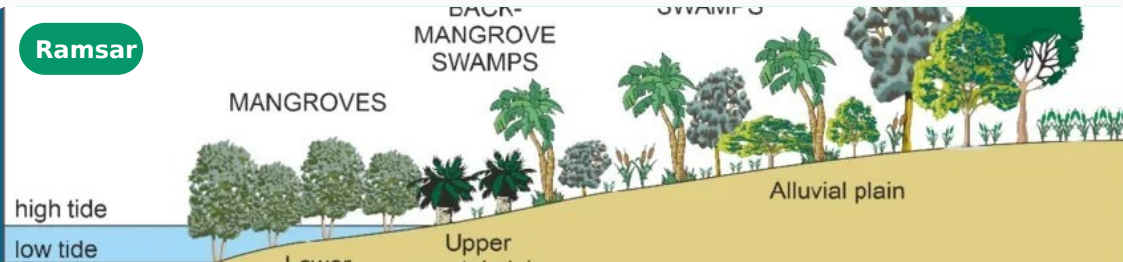


UNESCO  
WHC

## **Pitons Management Area** Saint Lucia

Twin volcanic spires recognized for Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Illustrates the challenge of managing a World Heritage natural site where strict preservation meets tourism pressure.

 **Framework Connection: Outstanding Universal Value**

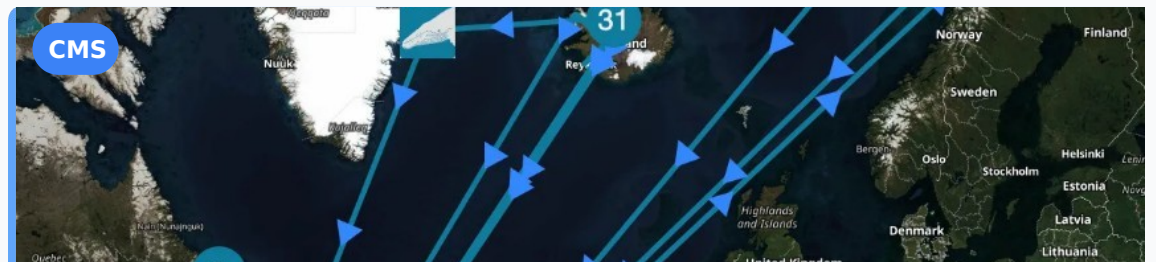


Ramsar

## **Nariva Swamp** Trinidad & Tobago

The largest freshwater wetland in T&T. Listed as a Wetland of International Importance, it showcases mangrove restoration efforts that align with Ramsar's 'Wise Use' mandate to support local livelihoods.

 **Framework Connection: Wise Use & Restoration**



CMS

## **Humpback Whale Corridor** Eastern Caribbean

A vital breeding and calving ground for North Atlantic populations. Highlights the necessity of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) for protecting transboundary marine animals across jurisdictions.

 **Framework Connection: Range State Cooperation**

# Key Takeaways



1

## Ocean Constitution & High Seas

**UNCLOS** defines ocean spaces and duties, forming the legal bedrock. The new **BBNJ Agreement** adds critical tools for High Seas MPAs and EIAs, closing the governance gap beyond national jurisdiction.



2

## Global Biodiversity Targets

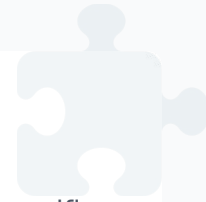
The **CBD's Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** sets the ambitious 2030 targets (like 30x30). Implementation is driven by robust finance mechanisms and mandatory national reporting.



3

## Integrated Governance

**CMS, Ramsar, MAB, and WHC** work in concert to govern specific aspects: migratory species, wetland ecosystems, sustainable development zones, and heritage sites of outstanding value.



4

## Caribbean Opportunity

Caribbean SIDS can strategically leverage all these frameworks to achieve **30x30** goals while securing climate-biodiversity co-benefits essential for island resilience and sustainable economies.



# Further Reading & Resources



## BBNJ & UNCLOS

### **UNTC: BBNJ Agreement Status**

Official status of the High Seas Treaty; critical for tracking Article 68 entry into force (Jan 17, 2026).

### **EU Directorate-General: High Seas Milestone**

Summary analysis of how the BBNJ framework fills UNCLOS governance gaps for MPAs.



## Strategic Planning 2026-2035

### **UNESCO Hangzhou MAB Strategic Action Plan**

The decade roadmap aligning 700+ Biosphere Reserves with GBF 30x30 targets.

### **Managing World Heritage (2026 Manual)**

Updated resource manual introducing the Heritage Place Approach for natural and cultural sites.



## 2026 Conference & COP Portals

### **CBD COP17 (Yerevan, Armenia)**

October 2026 portal for the first global review of GBF progress toward 30x30.

### **CMS COP15 (Campo Grande, Brazil)**

March 2026 hub focusing on the Samarkand Strategic Plan and migration barriers.

### **Ramsar COP15 (Victoria Falls)**

July 2025 outcomes on the Freshwater Challenge and Blue Carbon pledges.



## Technical Guidance & Analysis



### **IUCN: 2026 BBNJ Implementation Statement**

High-level analysis on shifting global ambition from target to achievable reality.

### **Global Wetland Outlook 2025/2026**

Report detailing threatened ecosystems and the role of Global Swimways.