

Philippines pushes for conserving and sustainably managing marine biodiversity

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Philippines Department of Agriculture is providing all out support to the Department of Foreign Affairs in promoting the ratification of the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), a strategically important treaty for an archipelago like the Philippines and in protecting global marine resources.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ratified the treaty in 2024—a year after the BBNJ was adopted—but failed to secure Senate concurrence.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said the BBNJ is the Philippines' strong commitment to marine protection under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The BBNJ Agreement is crucial for conserving and sustainably managing marine biodiversity in areas beyond the Philippines' jurisdiction, allowing the country to safeguard its rich marine ecosystems while ensuring fair access to and equitable sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources," said Secretary Tiu Laurel.

The BBNJ Agreement is an implementing agreement under UNCLOS and addresses conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, such as the high seas. The Philippines, an early signatory and active participant in negotiations, is pushing for Senate concurrence after the treaty was re-submitted in the 20th Congress.

Once approved by the Senate, the country's instrument of ratification will be deposited with the UN Secretary-General. Agriculture Undersecretary for Fisheries Drusila Esther Bayate said the ratification will allow the Philippines to participate in the first Conference of Parties (COP1), expected to convene after the 60th instrument is deposited. At the end of August, 55 states have ratified the BBNJ Agreement, with 60 needed for entry into force. A special treaty event during the UN General Assembly to be held between September 23-26 is anticipated to reach this milestone.

For the Philippines, the BBNJ ratification is strategically vital. As an archipelagic state bordering ABNJ, participation in the Agreement will enhance its influence in shaping global marine policy, while supporting local coastal communities and marine biodiversity conservation in line with the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award