

To the UN Environment Programme Secretariat and the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment,

On behalf of Parvati Foundation, I am delighted to submit our input to the specified questions on the ministerial declaration of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly.

The Environment Assembly has the opportunity to make a tremendous contribution to *Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* through calling on all member states of the United Nations to become signatories to the Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary (MAPS) Treaty on an urgent basis. The Environment Assembly needs the immediate realization of MAPS in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and protect all life now, and for generations to come.

We look forward to continuing to work with the UN Environment Programme and relevant stakeholders to realize MAPS, the Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary, for our collective good.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Parvati Foundation is an all-volunteer international nonprofit organization that supports a healthy world by helping people remember our inherent interconnection. When we understand that we are all connected, we instinctively know we must protect our planetary life support: the Arctic Ocean. The Arctic Ocean keeps our world cool, healthy and peaceful. But today it is under threat. MAPS, the Marine Arctic Peace Sanctuary, is an immediate and effective response. MAPS compels a global commitment to interconnection while protecting the entire Arctic Ocean north of the Arctic Circle as the largest marine conservation area in history.

The Arctic sea ice reflects the sun's heat away from the planet and keeps us cool. However, there is 75% less Arctic sea ice today than 50 years ago. This heats the ocean, which heats the planet. Because the world is overheating, the Arctic Ocean is melting, causing weather patterns to go out of balance, leading to floods, droughts, storms, sea level rise, crop failures, ocean acidification, food and water shortages, refugees, diseases, and deaths.

As Arctic sea ice melts, land ice thaws, releasing methane into the atmosphere that is 30 times more heating than carbon dioxide. Methane buried off the Arctic coast, where most exploitation takes place, is unstable. Scientists warn that interference with the seabed could trigger catastrophic eruptions.

Furthermore, our collective immunity depends on a healthy Arctic Ocean. The Arctic sea ice keeps permafrost from releasing viruses and bacteria worse than COVID-19, such as anthrax, smallpox, Spanish flu, and the plague. The permafrost also holds pathogens for which we have no name, let alone immunity or cure.

Leading biologists have urged us to protect 50% of the entire planet immediately to prevent mass extinction, and over 20,000 scientists from around the world have warned humanity that "time is running out." MAPS is ambitious, yet today it is a baseline necessity. As the world's largest marine protected area by far at 8 million square km, it protects 2.2% of the world's oceans, and about 2% of the world's total surface area. MAPS fits naturally with the UN's proposed commitment to protect 30% of our oceans by 2030. This is the pace at which we must move to protect life. We no longer have the luxury to work incrementally towards urgently needed protection.

MAPS also supports nations in meeting their objectives under the Paris Agreement. MAPS's prevention of Arctic seabed oil and gas exploitation alone will keep 148 trillion kilograms of CO2 out of our

atmosphere. Moreover, MAPS supports almost every United Nations Sustainable Development Goal. In the broadest sense, MAPS accelerates the realization of them all, because the sanctuary protects the entire planet and everything on it.

To realize this vision of a peaceful and healthy future, Parvati Foundation has taken the unprecedented step of creating the MAPS Treaty as an addendum to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The MAPS Treaty updates UNCLOS to reflect the reality of our changing climate and the urgent need to protect the Arctic sea ice. The MAPS Treaty declares all ocean waters north of the Arctic Circle off limits to commercialization, militarization and industrialization, and enters into force with the signatures of 99 world leaders of member states of the UN or any of its specialized agencies.

Countries of the world have heard the call for unity around MAPS and have already begun to sign the MAPS Treaty. His Excellency Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa, and His Excellency Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, are the first two world leaders to have endorsed this critical global initiative. The MAPS Treaty lights a path for nations of the world to set aside perceived regional differences, recognize the special role of the Arctic Ocean in preserving and nurturing life, and unite for the benefit of all.