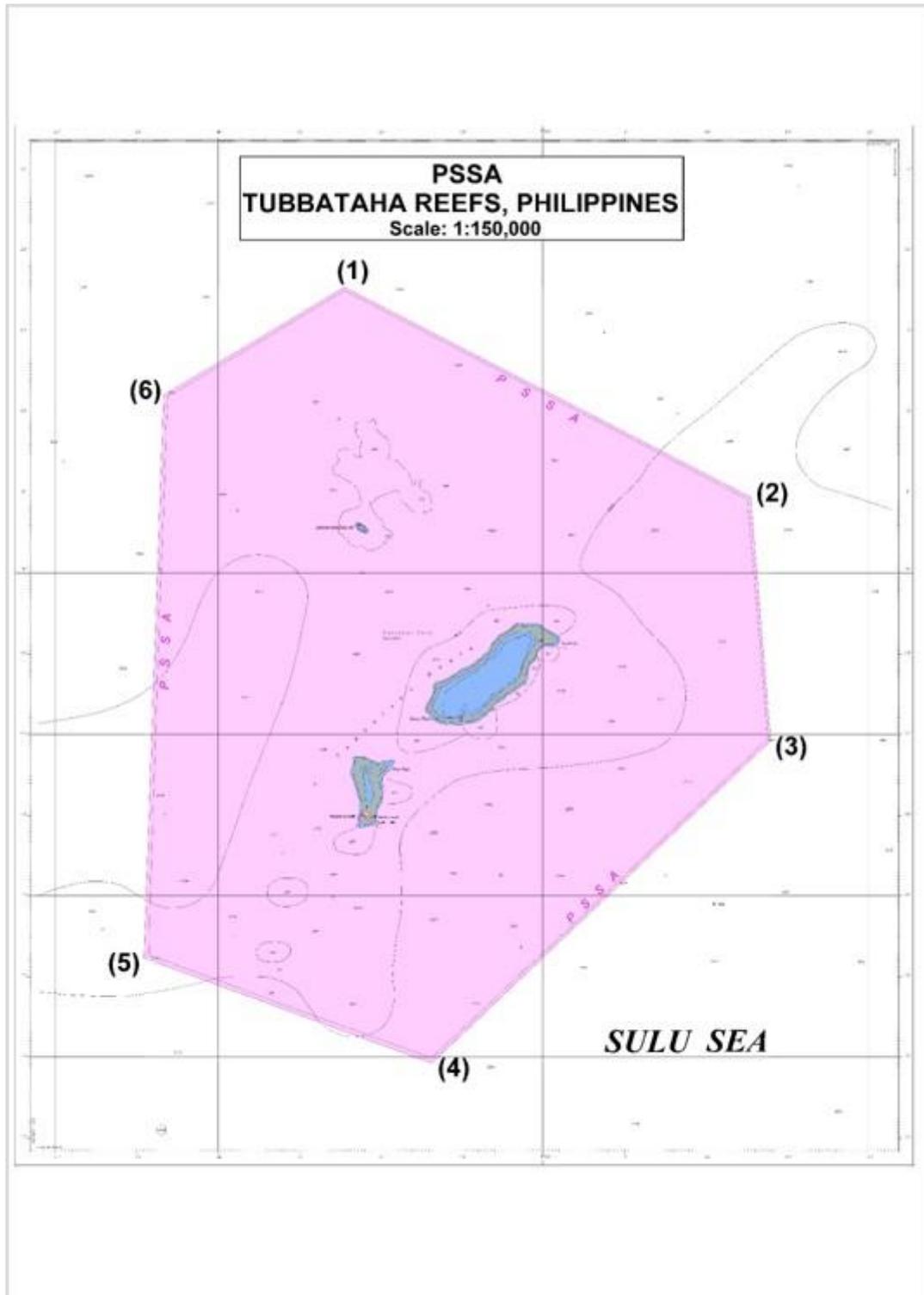


IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee Approves Designation of Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area



20 September 2017 - The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) approved on 07 July 2017 during its 71st session the Philippine application for the designation of the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (TRNP-PSSA) with the adoption of the MEPC Resolution on the TRNP in the Sulu Sea PSSA.

In adopting the resolution, MEPC 71 took note “of the ecological criteria, in particular the criteria relating to uniqueness or rarity, naturalness, diversity and fragility criteria, and the socio-economic and scientific criteria of the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park as well as its

vulnerability to damage by international shipping activities and the steps taken by the Philippines to address that vulnerability.”

Earlier, MEPC 71 adopted the recommendation of the IMO Maritime Safety Committee approving the TRNP area as an Area To Be Avoided (ATBA) by all types of ships of 150 gross tonnage and upwards. The ATBA is aimed at minimizing the risk of damage from ship groundings and pollution damage by international shipping activities and to protect the area's unique and threatened species as well as to preserve as far as practicable its critical habitat and diversity. The MEPC resolution stated that mariners should exercise extreme care when navigating in the area bounded by the geographical coordinates of the PSSA and adhere to the ATBA, which is defined by the following coordinates:

(1) 09° 17'.75 N, 119° 47'.79 E

(2) 09° 04'.73 N, 120° 12'.76 E

(3) 08° 49'.63 N, 120° 13'.99 E

(4) 08° 29'.63 N, 119° 53'.16 E

(5) 08° 36'.15 N, 119° 35'.46 E

(6) 09° 11'.06 N, 119° 36'.67 E

thence back to point (1).

The ATBA for the PSSA will take effect on 1 January 2018 at 0000 hours UTC based on an IMO Safety of Navigation Circular

In the resolution designating the region surrounding the TRNP as a PSSA, the MEPC invites IMO Member Governments to recognize the ecological, socio-economic and scientific criteria of the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park area as well as its vulnerability to damage by international shipping activities. The MEPC also invites Member Governments to note the ATBA to address the area's vulnerability. – *Philippine Embassy in London*