

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair.

My name is Vera Coelho and I represent Oceana, the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation.

Mr/Madam Chair, distinguished delegates: The sea belongs to all of us.

But often this public good is used for private gain.

We should have the right to know what's happening in our ocean – not just to demand its sustainable use, but to have a voice in its management.

Because without this transparency, there can be no accountability.

Transparency underpins EVERY successful example of good ocean governance, whether that's proper enforcement of protected areas, stakeholder access to decisionmakers, or mandated public review of coastal development projects.

We should expect governments, charged with this stewardship, to be proactive in seeking out ways to cast more light onto the process. But too often we in civil society find ourselves pushing against those

who do not want to make commercial fishing vessels more trackable,

who do not want to publish the details of taxpayers' money subsidizing overfishing,

who do not want to list the foreign vessels allowed to fish in their own citizens' waters, or who do not disclose where and how their vessels are fishing abroad.

We see how disempowered coastal fishing communities become when they cannot get data on the stocks in their waters, or on the foreign vessels off their shore. The people who have the most to lose are given the least access; their voices remain unheard.

This week, we need more than just a repackaging of existing commitments, more from our public officials than marginal progress against the status quo.

Mr/Madam Chair, we hope this week sees our leaders fundamentally reframe ocean management to BEGIN with an expectation of transparency, so that we can deliver the equitable, sustainable, and accountable governance we all need.

Thank you.