



## 2022 UN Ocean Conference

*Plenary Remarks of Brett Jenks, President & CEO, Rare*

Spurgeon Miler is the mayor of Guanaja, in the Bay Islands of Honduras. When he was elected, he quickly learned of a serious problem: Fish were declining, and marine habitats were dying – a result of coastal overfishing.

But while he saw a challenge, he didn't see apathy. There was collective community concern. So, Mayor Miller and a group of fishers worked together to establish no-take zones, areas where fishing was off limits so fish could recover. Imagine that – fishers voluntarily agreeing NOT to fish. It is a testament to the power of community. Protecting and effectively managing territorial waters – the thin band of ocean stretching 12 nautical miles from shore - is difficult. But it is possible, due in large part to local leaders like Mayor Miller. In fact, Mayor Miller – who is with me here today – was one of the first members of the Coastal 500, a global network of mayors working toward thriving coastal communities.

This movement of community-led co-management of fisheries has spread to more than 1300 coastal communities from the Coral Triangle to the Mesoamerican Reef. It is fast becoming one of the most replicable and equitable marine conservation strategies.

It also presents a solution to the two major holes in our global 30X30 plan, which only the people in this room can fill.

First, we need to prioritize the right 30 percent of the ocean. 30X30 will naturally advance large offshore protected areas. These are important but protecting the territorial seas might be more important. These waters comprise just 6% of the ocean yet harbor 70% of marine biodiversity; 90% of all marine jobs; 40% of the fish humans eat; AND are home to 100% of blue carbon – all the mangroves and seagrass beds we know.

And yet, less than 15% of ocean philanthropy is dedicated to community-based coastal habitat conservation and small-scale fishing issues.

Second, we must incentivize nations to get on board. Local and Indigenous communities depend on territorial waters for food and jobs - they can't be all off limits. By empowering communities to co-create marine protected areas and pair them with sustainable local fishing rights, both nature and people can thrive.

What can you do? Prioritize territorial seas. Mayor Miller pledged to use his role to work protect vital marine resources. Let's all pledge to use our own roles to do the same.