

Aquatic Life Institute  
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### **Distinguished Delegates,**

I speak on behalf of Aquatic Life Institute, with the support of the Aquatic Animal Alliance, a global coalition of over 170 organizations.

Each year, over **100 billion aquatic animals are farmed**, and **trillions more are caught in the wild** for human consumption, this is **35 times more** than all farmed land animals combined. Yet, the welfare of aquatic animals remains almost entirely absent from fisheries management and ocean conservation frameworks.

This is a critical and urgent gap.

Aquatic animals are sentient. They feel pain and stress. Failing to consider their welfare undermines our moral responsibilities and jeopardizes **the long-term resilience of fisheries**, especially for small-scale fishers whose livelihoods depend on healthy, stable ecosystems and fair markets.

Animal welfare and sustainability are not separate goals, they are **mutually reinforcing**. High-welfare practices can reduce stress-related mortality, improve product quality and crew safety, and promote selective, low-impact gear use. These practices benefit both animals and the communities that rely on them.

We recommend:

1. **Integrating aquatic animal welfare into fisheries policies and impact assessments**, including recognition in FAO guidelines and seafood certification schemes.
2. **Investing in high-welfare, low-trophic food systems**, like seaweed and bivalves, which also support climate and food security goals.
3. **Phase out inhumane practices**, including introducing humane stunning before slaughter in wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture.

As part of the global stakeholder community, we urge the UN and its Member States to recognize aquatic animals as sentient beings whose welfare matters, and that ensuring their welfare is essential for building ocean resilience and achieving SDG14.

Thank you.

