

## **UN Ocean Conference, Nice 2025 National Statement of Azerbaijan**

**Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,**

It is an honor to address you on this vital topic that reflects our shared global responsibility. I thank the United Nations and co-organizers for bringing us together to renew our commitment to SDG 14 – Life Below Water.

Last year, Azerbaijan, under the leadership and guidance of His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, successfully hosted COP29 in Baku, significant gathering addressing climate change, which is also inextricably linked with the oceans.

**Excellencies,**

There are many reasons why we urgently need to protect the oceans. They are vast reservoirs of biodiversity, vital to sustainable fishing, and essential to the the food security of billions.

They are also our planet's blue lungs, absorbing vast amount of carbon dioxide and producing oxygen on a scale far greater than forests or mountains. This makes them one of our most powerful allies in fighting climate change.

**Distinguished delegates,**

However, pollution, overfishing, habitat loss, and warming waters threaten this critical role. We are killing our friends in a fight that we are losing if we do not act adequately on time. If we fail to act, we risk losing a key natural buffer against climate change. Therefore, safeguarding our marine carbon sinks is not just an environmental imperative, but it is essential for sustaining life on Earth and achieving global climate goals.

News is not always menacing, because marine environments can bounce back if we take right actions. For example, when we banned whaling, we saw their numbers return from the brink. And we have already seen the power of marine protection zones to revive underwater habitats.

Protecting each element from the top predators down to the smallest plants is essential to the wellbeing of all. These ecosystems then start to provide services to their stewards, including carbon sequestration, which we urgently need.

**Excellencies,**

While focusing on oceans, we must also recognize the importance of inland water systems, which play a crucial role in climate resilience. Their protection and preservation must also be a top priority.

As a coastal nation along the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan has taken decisive actions to protect its environment. We established the first Marine Protected Area and declared the first Hope Spot in the Caspian Sea, marking a significant step toward marine conservation in the region.

In cooperation with neighbouring Caspian countries, we have agreed to a 10-year ban on sturgeon fishing to help restore and stabilize these iconic and endangered species. Recognizing their long-term ecological and economic value, we have also released millions of sturgeon fingerlings into the wild to support population recovery.

And at COP29, we launched the *Baku Dialogue on Water for Climate Action* to foster cooperation on shared water bodies, including inland seas like the Caspian.

We are also updating our National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. This will include clear goals, targets, and actions to protect and enhance our rich biodiversity. This will be in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Under the leadership and guidance of the President of Azerbaijan, we can see that these actions are clearly in our interest and yields tangible results.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

No single country can address these challenges alone. We need a robust multilateral process and collective commitment to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030. COP29 demonstrated that despite initial divisions, with courage and conviction, positive collective action is indeed possible. Together, we demonstrated that unity and shared purpose can overcome division, delivering outcomes that serve the common good of all humanity.

Ahead of COP29, widespread uncertainty, deepened divisions, and mistrust threatened to derail progress. Yet, together, we overcame these obstacles, reinforcing multilateralism and achieving historic outcomes: the Baku Finance Goal to mobilize \$300 billion annually by 2035 for developing countries leaving no one behind, operationalizing Article 6 of the Paris Agreement after a decade-long impasse, launching the Loss and Damage Fund to support frontline communities and concluding many other key decisions vital for climate action.

Many of these achievements once seemed impossible. We focused on shared benefits, stayed committed, and delivered what the international community expected.

Now, we must bring that same determination to ocean protection here in Nice. By galvanizing collective action to safeguard our oceans, we ultimately protect ourselves from the accelerating impacts of a warming planet.

At this critical moment, when multilateralism faces new challenges and divisions threaten unity again, let us seize this opportunity to find common ground and act decisively.

**I thank you.**