



National Statement of Belize to the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, 9-13 June 2025, Nice, France, delivered by His Excellency, Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister of Belize, and Minister of Finance, Investment and Economic Transformation, Civil Aviation and E-Governance

Excellencies, Colleagues,

On behalf of the people of Belize, I proudly welcome the political declaration *Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Action*. In doing so, I reaffirm our deep and enduring commitment to serving as responsible stewards of the ocean.

The ocean is our lifeline—it makes our very existence possible.

Every Belizean knows this truth deeply.

We honor it each time we recite our national anthem: *"Nature has blessed us with wealth untold", "a land by the Carib Sea."*

We are custodians of the largest living barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere—the Belize Barrier Reef, second in size only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Beyond its beauty, the reef sustains and protects us.

It contributes over \$1 billion annually to our economy, serves as a nursery for our fisheries, sustains the livelihoods of our fishers, and shields our coastline from storms and hurricanes.

We are unwavering in our protection of the Barrier Reef, the Caribbean Sea, and the broader marine and terrestrial environment.

Our commitment to environmental protection is rooted in strong legislation and a pioneering, science-based fisheries management model tailored for our small-scale fisheries.

Even before independence, our forebears began building a network of protected areas.

Today, that network covers approximately 36 percent of our land and 25 percent of our territorial waters.

Belize is fully committed to the global 30x30 goal—and we are on track to exceed it.

Our Petroleum Operations Infinite Moratorium, along with our Blue Economy Development Policy and Maritime Economy Plan, ensures that economic progress remains aligned with sustainable ocean governance.

Belize's Blue Economy Model is based on a reciprocal relationship with the ocean.

Like our Pacific Island brothers and sisters, we believe that we should take nothing more than we need.

And more so, we appreciate intimately that the ocean's generosity is not limitless.

Unbridled exploitative human activities are endangering the ocean, all its resources and all of us who depend on it.

Despite Belize's efforts and care for our ocean, we cannot shield ourselves from the consequences of climate change—rising seas, extreme weather, and warming temperatures.

Not for lack of will, but because we are not major emitters.

In fact, Belize contributes a mere 0.01 percent to global greenhouse gas emissions—and we remain a carbon sink.

Yet we have borne disproportionate costs, sinking into debt to recover from disasters we did not cause.

Our story mirrors that of the ocean—always giving, now at risk.

Marine habitats and species are vanishing at unprecedented rates.

Coral reefs have lost nearly half their extent since the 1870s, and without urgent action, most could disappear by 2040, taking countless species with them.

But this is not just about life below water—it's about life above it too.

The Third United Nations Ocean Conference must be more than a celebration of a new declaration.

It must be remembered as the day the world committed to transformative, inclusive, and equitable change.

Today, we should be celebrating the commitment of major emitters—especially those responsible since industrialization—to drastically reduce emissions across their whole economy so that global warming does not go beyond 1.5.

This is a scientific, and political imperative; a matter of justice and above all a matter of survival.

My people deserve the chance to thrive just as others have.

We should likewise be celebrating the new agreement on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and its early entry into force while committing to decisive responses to marine pollution and unsustainable fishing.

We must work together to achieve the 30x30 conservation target and ensure sustainable use of ocean resources.

Change must be deliberate, nature-positive, and technically sound.

Science and technical expertise must guide and support us every step of the way.

Finally, change must be fair.

We all have different capacities.

Belize has shown leadership, but our resources are limited.

Like other SIDS, we face unique structural challenges.

We need tailored global support.

That is why I urge you to support the **Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS** and the **AOSIS Declaration on Sea Level Rise**.

Today marks another milestone in our global mission to protect the ocean.

Let it be our legacy—the moment when the world chose change, change that made a lasting difference for our planet and our people.

I thank you.