

Check against Delivery



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE MUSA  
DRAMMEH, MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND WATER  
RESOURCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA  
AT THE THIRD AT THE UNITED NATIONS OCEAN  
CONFERENCE IN NICE, FRANCE**

**11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

**Theme: “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve  
and sustainably use the ocean”**

**Excellencies**  
**Distinguished Delegates**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency, President Adama Barrow.

As a small, low-lying coastal state, The Gambia's economy, culture, and identity are intrinsically tied to the ocean. Fisheries and coastal agriculture are central pillars of our GDP and employment, yet our coastal communities remain among the most vulnerable to climate-related impacts. Sea-level rise and coastal erosion are not distant threats; they are already displacing communities, damaging infrastructure, and undermining the sustainability of our Blue Economy.

The ocean is in crisis. Marine pollution, ocean acidification, rising temperatures, illegal fishing and biodiversity loss have pushed vital ecosystems to the brink of collapse. Our fisheries and water resources are threatened by the increase in marine pollution, including microplastics and global warming. For The Gambia, these are daily lived realities. Realities experienced by our fishers, our farmers, and our families.

Through targeted policies, community involvement, and partnerships, The Gambia has restored around 340 square kilometers of forests, wetlands, rivers, and coasts which make up nearly 3% of its territory. Our navy is intensifying efforts against illegal fishing, while community initiatives like mangrove restoration and sustainable agriculture support environmental recovery and livelihoods. We have adopted national fisheries policy that bans the single-use of plastics and nonfilament nets.

We are also committed to establishing a Marine Protected Area to conserve marine biodiversity, sustain fisheries and enhance coastal resilience, contributing to global marine conservation and climate adaptation goals.

Furthermore, The Gambia continues to demonstrate national and international commitment. We are reviewing our fisheries legislation to better protect spawning and nursery grounds and have adopted a national fisheries policy that embraces an ecosystem approach, promotes scientific research, and incorporates international legal instruments. Our National Environment Management Act and Fisheries Act provide the legal basis for sustainable resource management, while policies like the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan and Marine Protected Areas Policy balance ecological protection with economic development.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

This Conference must go beyond declarations. For The Gambia, this is a fight for survival. Therefore, it must serve as a launchpad for tangible action driven by science, innovation, and financing to manage our oceans effectively and inclusively.

The Gambia calls for strong African leadership in advancing ocean governance, recognizing it as a critical issue for our region. We underscore the need for renewed global ambition and enhanced international cooperation, and we urge developed countries to step up their efforts in preserving the ocean. Increased investment in ocean protection is vital to counter accelerating threats and their far-reaching impacts. Safeguarding the ocean is not only essential for the lives and livelihoods it supports but also remains one of the most effective defenses against escalating environmental loss and its cascading consequences.

Since its entry into force, the BBNJ Agreement has become a vital tool for maintaining maritime peace and security, promoting sustainable ocean use, ensuring safe navigation, and protecting the marine environment. The Gambia reaffirms its commitment to ratifying this binding international instrument and aligning national policies with its objectives to support global efforts in safeguarding marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction and advancing a shared vision of a healthy, resilient ocean.

We stress the urgent need for developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to access adequate financing for sustainable ocean governance. In this context, we call for ocean solutions supported by predictable, grant-based funding that reflects the unique circumstances of our nations. We also support the establishment of a global ocean fund that is accessible to low-income countries and designed with streamlined, inclusive modalities.

Finally, it is in our collective interest to reverse the many irresponsible human activities in the ocean to address these pressing challenges. We must work together to advance innovative, science-based solutions that protect the health of our oceans and secure the future livelihoods that depend on the full realization of SDG14.

In conclusion, we thank France and Costa Rica for co-hosting this conference and convey profound gratitude to the People and Government of France for their warm hospitality.

I thank you.