

[Plant-for-the-Planet](#)

Sagar Aryal

Chief Technology Officer

Your Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,
I did not grow up by the ocean.
But I grew up where glaciers melt, rivers run dry, and people pray for rain.
So I learned at 10 years old—when nature is wounded, so are we.

Today, I speak for over 100,000 Children and Youth Ambassadors from Plant-for-the-Planet — winners of the [2024 SDG Action Awards](#), and as Chair of the Technical Subcommittee of the GEF Civil Society Network.

But mostly, I speak as one of millions refusing to inherit an ocean that is empty, and acidifying—while negotiations drag on.

This week, we talked about SDG 14. We applauded progress. We debated frameworks.
But the ocean doesn't need applause.

It needs protection.

That's why ratifying the BBNJ agreement is not just a legal step.
It's a moral line in the sand.

How can we speak of ocean justice if two-thirds of our seas remain lawless?
How can we protect biodiversity when treaties move slower than extinction?

The BBNJ, though not perfect, is a step forward in managing the ocean's fragile ecosystems.

We need every government to ratify.
Not tomorrow. Not next year.
Now.

But even that is not enough!
We cannot manage what we cannot measure. We cannot restore what we cannot see.

We need open technology to monitor and verify progress, and call on governments to make ocean data accessible, support community monitoring, and ensure youth and civil society have a real voice in every SDG 14 decision—from local plans to BBNJ implementation.

And we need to stop pretending this is someone else's fight.
The future of the ocean is the future of food.
The future of security.
The future of life.

Civil society, youth, and local communities are ready to partner, innovate, and help monitor progress.

The ocean is not waiting. And neither are we.

Thank you!