



# UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE NICE, FRANCE 2025

## UNOC3 Conference Side Event

Bridging the Conservation Gap: Integrating Indigenous Practices for Equitable Fisheries in Ghana

11<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 17:30-18:45, Blue Zone (Room 2)

Organized by: Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture (MoFA), Ghana in partnership with the Fisheries Commission (Ghana), University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR), Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC), University of St. Andrews, and University of British Columbia

### Background on the event

This side event convened by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture (MoFA), Ghana, explored the integration of indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge into modern fisheries management frameworks. The session aimed to highlight the vital role of local communities and customary practices in closing the marine conservation gap and ensuring socially equitable fisheries in Ghana. Drawing on diverse expertise from academia, civil society and local fisherfolk, the event showcased successful co-management models and facilitated dialogue on how traditional governance mechanisms such as taboos, seasonal closures, and traditional-based fishing rules can complement state-led conservation efforts. The event was timely, aligning with the broader UNOC3 themes of inclusivity, equity and knowledge co-production in ocean governance.

### Key Issues discussed

- The marginalization of indigenous and local knowledge in formal marine policy frameworks.
- The ecological and cultural significance of traditional practices such as the “closed season” and sacred no-fishing zones.

- Weak institutional linkages between national fisheries authorities and community governance structures.
- The potential of co-management regimes to balance conservation, equity, and livelihoods.
- Gender roles and intergenerational knowledge transmission in artisanal fisheries.
- The need for better documentation, recognition, and mainstreaming of traditional ecological knowledge.
- The value of academic partnerships in validating and scaling indigenous-led conservation innovations.

### **Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments**

- Strengthen the integration of indigenous knowledge into Ghana's national fisheries management and policy frameworks.
- Promote inclusive stakeholder platforms to enhance dialogue between traditional authorities, government agencies, and researchers.
- Develop capacity-building programmes to document and preserve traditional marine practices, especially among youth and women.
- Mobilize international technical and financial support for scaling community-based marine conservation models.
- Encourage research collaboration to bridge science and tradition in ocean governance, leveraging universities and local institutions.