

AÐALRÆÐA FLUTT Í PLENARY Á UNOC 10. JÚNÍ 2025

H.E. JÓHANN PÁLL JÓHANSSON, MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND CLIMATE:

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, friends of the ocean,

It is a great honor to address you today at the Third United Nations Ocean Conference. For us in Iceland, the ocean is never far away. It shapes everything.

For decades, Iceland has relied on science for ocean governance and sustainable management. We have developed a well-functioning quota-system, enforced rigorous monitoring of fish stocks, and committed to full transparency in our catch reporting. These steps have served us well and we are proud of them.

But responsible fisheries management is not enough. We must go further and we must embrace a broader, ecosystem-based approach — one that puts biodiversity at the heart of ocean policy. This means not only managing what we harvest, but also safeguarding what must remain untouched.

Beneath the surface of the North Atlantic lies so much more than fish. Our waters are home to rich and diverse ecosystems: vibrant coral gardens, towering seamounts, geothermal vents and fragile habitat. This is a treasure that must be protected, a treasure that the Icelandic government is going to protect.

We are firmly committed to the 30 by 30 goal and we are currently in the process of identifying the marine areas most critical for biodiversity. We are laying the groundwork for meaningful science-driven steps towards greater conservation of our ocean.

Because dear delegates. Marine Protected Areas are not about locking the ocean away; they are about keeping it alive. Conservation is not a constraint—it is the backbone of resilience, and sustainable fisheries can only thrive in a resilient ocean. This is why we must take a strong precautionary stance on deep-sea mining, and do nothing that cannot be undone. In this context I must stress the importance of the rule of law at sea. Iceland has advocated and will continue to advocate for the central role of UNCLOS as the legal framework by which we govern the ocean. We strongly support its universal application and Iceland is committed to ratifying the BBNJ Agreement and we are on track to do so in our next parliamentary session.

As Chair of the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, Iceland is proud to promote the potential of aquatic foods to end hunger and as a vital part of sustainable food systems. Blue foods are rich in nutrients and generally have a low carbon footprint; they contribute meaningfully to global food security in a warming world. With thoughtful governance and innovation, they can support livelihoods, nutrition, climate mitigation and resilience all at once.

Finally, Iceland is deeply engaged in the global fight against marine pollution, including plastic pollution. Iceland supports the development of a robust global agreement to tackle plastic pollution across its entire lifecycle, as we recognize its growing threat to ocean health and food security. Let

us fulfil the mandate of the current negotiations, and conclude an ambitious plastics treaty at the upcoming meeting in Geneva in August. Iceland has organized two International Symposiums on Plastics in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic Region, and I am pleased to announce that preparations are already underway for the Third Symposium on Marine Plastic Pollution, to be held in 2026. This time, it will focus on the entire Atlantic Ocean—north to south.

Dear delegates, Iceland continues to stand ready to work with all partners to ensure that the ocean remains a source of life, food, and opportunity for generations to come. We must act with urgency, but also with unity and determination.

Thank you.