

**STATEMENT BY HONORABLE NETO ZARZAR LIGHE, SR.  
COMMISSIONER/CEO OF THE LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY (LiMA)  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA  
AT THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE (UNOC3)  
SIDE-EVENT:  
“No Safe Harbor: Exposing the True Beneficiaries of Crimes at Sea”  
Nice, France | June 9–13, 2025**

**Excellencies,  
Honorable Ministers from France, Ghana, the Maldives, and Panama,  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I bring you warm greetings from His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr., President of the Republic of Liberia.

The President conveys his sincere appreciation and support for this gathering dedicated to the stewardship and responsible governance of our oceans and marine resources.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Liberia, I express profound gratitude to the Member States of the United Nations for the confidence reposed in Liberia through our election as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the term 2026-2027.

As a nation, we are deeply honored by this trust and affirm our dedication to the principles of multilateralism, peace and international cooperation. Liberia stands ready to work with all Council Members and Member States to promote global peace and security.

It is both an honor and a solemn duty to be here as we collectively reaffirm our commitment to the sustainable management of our marine natural capital within the blue economy framework. Liberia has taken a major step by developing and validating the National Blue Economy Strategy that provides a clear pathway for utilizing Liberia’s vast blue economy potential. We believe that the blue economy will ensure environmental protection, stimulate economic growth, create jobs for local communities and reduce socio-economic disparities.

For Liberia, our future is closely tied to the health of our oceans. We recognize our essential role in advancing sustainable ocean governance to

strengthen resilience against food insecurity and the growing climate challenges. Our marine sector is central to our development. It provides a primary source of protein to an estimated 80 percent of the Liberian population. This sector is a critical revenue stream, contributing approximately 10 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The fisheries sector is also a key driver of economic empowerment—60 percent of its workforce are women, many of whom are based in coastal communities and rely on the fish trade for their livelihoods.

**Distinguished delegates**, to protect and preserve the livelihood of many that operate in the fishery sector, we must fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing—as well as overfishing—which continue to pose grave threats to the sustainability of maritime security. IUU fishing potentially undermines the sustainability of fisheries and with no doubts has the proclivity to fuel and finance organized sea crimes.

As the current President of the Fisheries Committee for the **West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)**, Liberia is committed to eliminating **IUU fishing** from our waters and ready to work with Member States in championing this cause across the subregion. **In 2022**, at the **Lisbon Ocean Conference**, Liberia pledged its full support for the **Lisbon Declaration**.

Since then, we have made measurable progress, including advancing our cooperation through international frameworks such as the **African Union's Blue Economy Strategy** and the ratification of the **Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)**. We have established co-management associations in six of our nine coastal counties and are working diligently to expand these structures nationwide.

Liberia has also recently joined the **Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)**, reaffirming our dedication to open and accountable fisheries governance.

Furthermore, Liberia has ratified and deposited with the UNOC-3 the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement**, and is also working toward ratifying the **ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188)** and the **Cape Town Agreement**. These instruments are integral to enhancing global ocean governance and protecting the rights of workers in the fisheries sector. In 2017, Liberia was pre-identified through a yellow card by the EU, to which end this Government of President Joseph Nyuma Boakia

has taken many significant steps in removing the yellow card. With support from partners and member states, and considering the importance of addressing the yellow-card, our government believes that it is possible in 2025. Our resolve to end **IUU fishing** and bring greater transparency to our ocean governance systems remains steadfast.

Consistent with this commitment, the Government of Liberia proudly endorses the **Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency** at this **UNOC-3** side event and takes this opportunity to reaffirm that endorsement.

We remain committed to working with regional and international partners to ensure that beneficial ownership information is fully accessible, so that those truly responsible for illegal fishing operations are held accountable.

Liberia will not serve as a safe harbor for illegal fishing activities.

As President of the **FCWC**, Liberia pledges to continue leading the regional charge against illegal fishing and to promote robust fisheries transparency. These efforts are in full alignment with our national development blueprint, the **ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID)**.

Our government is determined to restore Liberia's fishing industry to its former strength, prior to the disruption caused by years of civil unrest. We recognize the work that lies ahead, but we are confident that, through coordinated partnerships and strong collective action, our goals are attainable. This convening of leaders, experts, and policymakers underscores the interconnectedness between healthy oceans and the well-being of the communities that depend on them.

Distinguished Delegates, we recognize that our fishermen and women, together with the local communities residing along coastal areas are basically the frontlines beneficial owners of any and all of the multitude of gains and assistance from our collective efforts in protecting and continuously sustaining our eco-system. Hence, we have to support communities in ensuring that our system and resources remain sustainable.

While we are proud of the strides we have made, we acknowledge that continued progress will require sustained collaboration.

To this end, we welcome international support to build our national capacities in enforcement, traceability, and governance. We are committed to aligning

our efforts with global best practices to strengthen participatory and inclusive management. Governments, industry actors, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the global community must come together to protect our oceans and the livelihoods of those that depend on it.

Many thanks and appreciation to the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) for this forum. Liberia stands ready to accelerate the urgent actions needed to conserve and sustain our oceans, creating a future where marine ecosystems thrive and the communities that rely on them flourish for generations to come.

Thank you.