



**Address  
by President of Iceland  
Guðni Th. Jóhannesson  
at the FAO  
Special Event on Blue Transformation  
25 July 2023**

Ladies and gentlemen,  
dear friends.

It gives me great pleasure to address this event from Iceland. I speak to you from an island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Life here rests on a delicate balance between ocean currents, temperatures, and biodiversity. Nothing is given in this environment. We are always reminded of the need to respect the forces of nature. We have also learned that we must manage our resources in a sustainable way. We know that they can not be exploited without care or consideration. Indeed, there was a time when we had to deter the risk of destruction. Yes, there was a time when we Icelanders took unilateral measures to protect the waters around our island.

Fortunately, international law was also developing in our favour. Now as before, we support international legal and ethical frameworks under UN auspices where we move towards a peaceful and prosperous relationship between nations, with the interests and needs of nature at heart.

Humanity is faced with numerous challenges. Here in Iceland, we see the effects of the climate crisis in receding glaciers and in the ocean that surrounds us. The seas are warming up, at a higher rate in the Arctic and the northern seas than elsewhere on the planet.

Still, we also have reasons to be optimistic. There have been positive developments, thanks to the important work of good people like you. So, together we must secure global pledges to conserve and advance our biodiversity. We must reduce plastic pollution and we must fight unregulated fishing, to name a few recent examples. Yes, we must keep this momentum. There is still more work to be done.

Iceland fully shares the concerns of the Small Island and Developing States, and marginalized coastal communities. The call now is for programs designed for environmental and social protection, emphasizing quality nutrition and low emissions.

With all this in mind, Iceland is proud to chair the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition. The coalition provides an inspiring example of how partnerships can be built across sectors, to support mainstreaming the role of marine and freshwater ecosystems in providing food security and nutrition to those in need. With these positive initiatives, a constructive framework has been created for action. After all, good intentions mean nothing without the willingness to act.

I wish you a productive special event and I commend the UN and FAO for calling on all of us to take decisive action for blue transformation.

Thank you. Takk fyrir.