



## Let's Be Nice to the Ocean - The Transparency Principle

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### Issue

Our ocean is under threat like never before. Marine biodiversity is in dangerous decline, while lawless fishing is destroying ecosystems, hurting coastal communities and undermining economies. At the heart of the problem lies a simple truth: We cannot effectively protect what we cannot see.

As ocean resources can be shared across jurisdictions and are often out of sight, ocean governance presents particular challenges to decision makers. Shining a light on human activity at sea is resource intensive, and the burden can fall to those with the greatest biodiversity but the least capacity.

Transparency is firmly on the ocean agenda but is yet to be realized as a powerful and inclusive approach to better ocean governance. Transparency fosters accountability, enables diverse stakeholders to participate in decision-making, management, and monitoring, and it helps incentivize collaboration. That is why it must be a central theme at the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) 2025.

### Our Proposal

Open and effective transparency should be centerstage at UNOC3, and is fundamental to raising ambition across a range of ocean governance issues and collective goals. Improving transparency is of growing interest as it benefits collective efforts for monitoring and accountability. UNOC3 will showcase topics of relevance for the collective ocean agenda. A central issue for cooperation in topics such as fisheries management, biodiversity, and ocean governance at the international level, has historically been the importance of equitable and timely information and data access for decision making.

We propose:

- Transparency is included as a central theme at UNOC3 and other key international governance meetings, with discussion on the concept and its definition.
- Established transparency initiatives, and leaders in transparency adoption from government, are showcased. Transparency is already in action—[13 countries around the world](#)<sup>1</sup> have committed to share their vessel monitoring systems data in a progressive first step towards adopting a transparent approach to governance.
- Priority actions to unlock political and corporate leadership for open data that provide equitable and honest insights into compliance in fisheries governance at international (UN, FAO), regional (RFMO), and national government levels, including multilateral cooperation in the high seas, is discussed.
- Provide spaces for States to make ambitious commitments related to the importance of sharing data and collaborating with each other, and to use transparency to drive sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by our ocean.
- Issue a public call for transparency, technology and innovation commitments for ocean protection.

Our proposal is attached to the opportunity that UNOC3 presents but addresses an ongoing issue that is not limited to discussion at this one event.

### Additional Background

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<sup>1</sup> Belize, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Indonesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, and Palau.



An increasing number of ocean governance stakeholders recognize that transparency can offer a progressive approach to managing our ocean. All decision makers—the policy-maker developing legislation, the body authorizing a fishing vessel to operate, the manager implementing marine protections, the scientist calculating blue carbon sink analyses, the inspector boarding a vessel to assess compliance and the judge issuing a penalty for noncompliance—need to know the true vessel identity, what it is authorized to do and where it has been operating.

Transparency—the act of making specific ocean and vessel data, as well as the policies and decisions that surround them, both available and accessible to those that need it, and using these policies and data to inform action—offers a modern, cost-effective and scalable approach to fisheries governance.

The use of transparency as a means to govern natural resources is not a new concept. Good use of accurate data has always informed the governance of shared resources. However, resources that move across jurisdictions, such as international fisheries, require a vast amount of accessible data. Making accurate and comprehensive information available to every ocean manager that needs it is a significant and costly undertaking. Therefore ensuring the transparency of the underlying data, which is used to develop and implement policies, is the next step in the natural evolution of how shared resources are managed.

Transparency is already [recognized by the UN](#) as a key concept in international good governance. While this has not yet been formally reflected in ocean governance, transparency is a crucial contemporary concept. If implemented, transparency can enable a wide range of benefits. For fisheries management, transparency can help to establish a global baseline of data on human activity at sea and improve targeted monitoring, control and surveillance efforts, making them more efficient, less dependent on interpersonal relationships between practitioners and in some cases, allowing for automation of certain processes. Fisheries supply chains are improved by transparency, enabling traders and consumers to have a clearer picture of whether the fish they are consuming is legitimately caught.

Political leadership is needed if the global ocean community is to benefit from transparency. International recognition is the first step in solidifying transparency as a core principle in fisheries management. Leaders must acknowledge collaboration as a worthy and useful endeavour, positioning transparency as a central tenet among those with the most advanced management systems, as those who lack abundant resources often benefit from transparency the most.



[Global Fishing Watch website](#)

[Transparency: A Necessary Principle for Greater Ocean Governance](#)

## Global Fishing Watch

Global Fishing Watch (GFW) is in the vanguard of global efforts to realize a transformational shift toward transparency in ocean governance and data-led decision making. Founded in 2015 through a collaboration between three partners (Oceana, an international ocean conservation organization; SkyTruth, a technology firm that uses satellite imagery and data to protect the environment; and Google, whose tools and contributions help process big data) GFW seeks to advance ocean governance through increased transparency of human activity at sea. By creating and publicly sharing map visualizations, data and analysis tools, we enable scientific research and drive a transformation in how we manage our ocean.

We generate new knowledge by using cutting-edge technology to turn big data into actionable information. We share that information publicly, and for free, to accelerate science and drive fairer, smarter policies and practices that reward good behavior and protect biodiversity, fisheries and livelihoods. By 2030, we aim to monitor and visualize the impact of ocean-going vessels, both industrial and small-scale, that are responsible for the vast majority of the global seafood catch.

### Related to the following topics of the *Let's be Nice to the Ocean* e-book

- The Protection Principle
- Blue Finance and subsidies reform
- Zero discharge targets
- Ministries of the Ocean with holistic ecosystemic mandates and Visions
- Reformed governance of migratory & straddling biodiversity
- Deep Sea protection and conservation
- Southern Ocean protection
- Modernized Mediterranean protection regime for the 21st century