

Dear UNEP Secretariat,

Aquatic Life Institute thanks you for the opportunity to provide a second round of inputs on the draft Ministerial Declaration of UNEA-7. We recognize the extensive work that has gone into this Zero Draft and commend the strong commitments made to climate action, biodiversity, circular economy, and sustainable food systems.

As a previously contributing organization, we welcome the emphasis on systemic solutions and multilateral cooperation reflected in the current text. However, we remain concerned that key elements from our initial submission - particularly relating to aquatic food systems and aquatic animal welfare - have not yet been integrated. These omissions risk leaving a major gap in the scope and effectiveness of the Declaration, given the significant role aquatic systems play in global food security, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Suggested Additions and Revisions:

**1. Recognize Aquatic Food Systems as a Critical Policy Area**

The declaration's reference to sustainable food systems is timely and necessary. However, it remains incomplete without explicitly addressing aquatic food systems, which include aquaculture and capture fisheries. These sectors are expanding rapidly and have substantial environmental impacts yet continue to receive little attention in global environmental governance. We strongly recommend integrating language that:

- Acknowledges the environmental and welfare challenges posed by unsustainable aquaculture and fishing practices;
- Calls for science-based and welfare-conscious policies in aquatic food production;
- Promotes transparency and accountability in aquaculture subsidy reporting.

**2. Include Aquatic Animal Welfare within Environmental Sustainability**

The omission of animal welfare, especially for aquatic animals, stands in contrast to growing scientific consensus and public concern. Recognizing the sentience of aquatic species and their role in ecosystems is aligned with UNEP's own support for a One Health/One Welfare approach. We urge the declaration to incorporate a commitment to improving the welfare of all animals, including fish, as part of advancing resilient and ethical food systems.

**3. Align with One Health and Nature-Positive Approaches**

Despite several strong references to integration and science-based policymaking, the declaration would benefit from explicitly referencing the One Health framework. This would help strengthen connections between ecosystem health, human well-being, and animal protection. Additionally, the promotion of regenerative and nature-positive aquatic food systems could support biodiversity and climate goals while aligning with the call for a just transition.

We appreciate the inclusive approach UNEP has taken throughout this process. As stakeholders committed to strengthening environmental sustainability, we believe it is critical that the declaration recognizes the overlooked but highly impactful role of aquatic food systems and animal welfare. Addressing these areas will enhance the credibility, coherence, and ambition of UNEA-7's outcomes.

We remain available for further discussion and support. Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication.

Sincerely,

Giulia Maleri

Head of Global Policy

Aquatic Life Institute