

Dr. Foluke Areola takes over as new President of the World Aquaculture Society



Dr. Foluke Areola's Acceptance Speech at The Inauguration Ceremony in Singapore

Your Excellency, Ambassador Francisca Kemi Omayuli, Nigeria High Commission Singapore
Distinguished Guests,
Past Presidents and Leaders of the World Aquaculture Society,
Members of the Board of Directors,
Fellow Aquaculture Professionals,
Partners, Colleagues, **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with profound humility, deep gratitude, and great optimism that I stand before you today to formally assume office as President of the World Aquaculture Society.

This moment is deeply personal, but far greater than that, it is historic. It represents not only a milestone in my own professional journey but also a powerful affirmation of the growing voice, visibility, and contribution of Africa and the Global South within the global aquaculture community.

For me personally, having benefited from the opportunities, education, mentorship, and public service platforms provided by my homeland, Nigeria, from childhood to this day, this moment carries profound humility, gratitude, and responsibility. I want to thank the Ambassador for representing my great country Nigeria here today

I sincerely thank the membership of the World Aquaculture Society for the confidence reposed in me. I accept this responsibility with a deep sense of duty, commitment, and service to our profession and to humanity.

I pay tribute to all the leaders who have served before me and who have built this great Society into one of the world's most respected professional platforms for aquaculture science, education, innovation, and collaboration. Their dedication has laid a strong foundation upon which we shall continue to build.

I especially wish to acknowledge Wendy, our outgoing President, whose guidance, mentorship, and support over the past months have greatly assisted my transition into this role. Thank you, Wendy, for your generosity of spirit and your exemplary leadership. I wish you continued success and fulfilment in all your future endeavours.

I also acknowledge my mentors, colleagues, family, friends, development partners, financial institutions, philanthropic organizations, and the many institutions and professionals across Africa and the world whose support, encouragement, collaboration, investments, and shared commitment to advancing sustainable aquaculture, scientific innovation, and human development have helped shape both the progress of the World Aquaculture Society and my own professional journey over the decades.

I am especially touched that my daughter has travelled all the way from the United States to witness this important occasion. Her presence here today means a great deal to me personally.

Today, aquaculture stands at a defining moment in human history.

The world faces increasing pressures from population growth, food insecurity, climate change, environmental degradation, unemployment, poverty, and inequality. Aquaculture therefore carries a tremendous responsibility—not only as a food production sector, but also as a strategic pillar for sustainable development, nutrition, livelihoods, economic transformation, and social stability.

Yet the future of aquaculture cannot be built on production expansion alone. It must be founded upon sustainability, inclusion, scientific integrity, environmental stewardship, animal welfare, equity, innovation, and global cooperation.

As President of the World Aquaculture Society, I intend to champion several important priorities.

First, strengthening global collaboration and inclusiveness within WAS, ensuring that all regions, particularly those that have historically been underrepresented within global scientific and aquaculture platforms, are meaningfully represented within the global aquaculture discourse.

Second, promoting youth empowerment, mentorship, and professional development, because the future of aquaculture depends on the next generation of scientists, farmers, innovators, policymakers, and entrepreneurs.

Third, supporting science-driven and climate-smart aquaculture systems that are environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, and economically viable.

Fourth, encouraging stronger partnerships between academia, industry, governments, development organizations, local communities, and financial institutions to bridge the gap between science, policy, financing, and practical implementation.

Fifth, elevating conversations around aquatic animal health, welfare, biosecurity, food safety, and ethical production systems as essential components of sustainable aquaculture development.

And finally, promoting greater solidarity among nations and regions, recognizing that our shared challenges require shared solutions.

I strongly believe that aquaculture has the potential to become one of humanity's most important instruments for building a more food-secure, peaceful, and sustainable future.

But this can only happen if we work together.

No single country, institution, region, or profession can address the challenges before us alone.

We therefore need stronger networks, stronger science, stronger institutions, stronger mentorship, stronger financing partnerships, and stronger global solidarity.

To young professionals and students listening today, I say this: your generation will shape the future of aquaculture in ways we can only begin to imagine. Be courageous. Be innovative. Remain ethical. Continue learning. The future belongs to those willing to serve humanity through knowledge, compassion, and responsible leadership.

To women in aquaculture across the world, especially those from regions where opportunities remain limited, let this moment serve as a reminder that leadership is possible. Your voices, your talents, and your contributions are needed now more than ever.

And to the men who continue to support inclusion, mentorship, and equitable opportunities within our profession, I thank you for your partnership and encouragement.

To Africa and the Global South, I say: this historic achievement is a call to greater responsibility, greater participation, greater professionalism, and greater contribution to global science and sustainable food systems.

At the same time, we should continue strengthening constructive partnerships and mutual learning with colleagues and institutions from the Global North, as we collectively advance sustainable aquaculture development worldwide.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I assume this office today, I do so fully aware of the enormous responsibility entrusted to me.

But I also do so with hope.

Hope in science.

Hope in collaboration.

Hope in humanity.

And hope in our collective capacity to build a more sustainable future through aquaculture.

Together, let us continue advancing a World Aquaculture Society that is globally respected, scientifically vibrant, professionally inclusive, and responsive to the needs of both present and future generations.

I thank you all for your trust, your partnership, and your friendship.

May we continue moving forward together in unity, service, and shared purpose.

Thank you very much.