



**STATEMENT BY DAVID COOPER
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at the

**UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE
PLENARY STATEMENT**

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*Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,*

Thank you for the opportunity to address you here today as we gather to address the ongoing water and sanitation crisis; a crisis inherently linked with the climate and biodiversity crises.

Biodiversity, in a word, is life. It is about the abundance and diversity of species, genes and ecosystems on Earth. It provides us with critical functions and services that keep this planet alive.

The provision of clean water and the regulation of water flows depend on water related ecosystems including wetlands, rivers, peatlands and forests. These ecosystems purify water and prevent and attenuate floods and droughts. They provide habitat for fish – and they depend on biodiversity.

But biodiversity is being lost and ecosystems are being degraded.

Freshwater ecosystems are particularly impacted.

The consequences are often most severe for those who rely directly on these ecosystem services for their livelihoods, especially indigenous peoples, local communities, family farmers, and fisherfolk. The effects will be catastrophic if these trends are not reversed.

The need for urgent transformative actions drove the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to adopt the ambitious Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, last December.

The Framework comprises a new set of global goals and targets, charting a clear path forward to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030.

Each of the 23 action targets of the Framework are relevant to water.



For example, targets aim to protect and restore critical habitats, reduce pollution and minimize the impacts of invasive alien species, and call for areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry are managed sustainably.

Other targets call for the values of biodiversity – including water-related values – to be integrated into policies across all government ministries, economic sectors, and all facets of society.

Above all, the Framework also states that these actions must be taken through a whole-of-government, whole-of-society and a gender-responsive approach, while also ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The Framework is underpinned by a human-rights based approach.

Action to implement the new Framework is required now, to achieve results this decade.

To accelerate and achieve transformation, we need to galvanize actions beyond our usual constituencies.

The UN 2023 Water Conference presents an opportunity to leverage strong cross-sectoral synergies through the Water Action Agenda.

Let this Conference be a watershed moment on the path to achieving the goals and targets of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, to achieving SDG 6, and all the Sustainable Development Goals, and to build a future where we all live in harmony with nature.

Thank you.