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DEPARTMENT OF
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SOURCE TO SEA

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Table of Contents



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03

Introduction

04

Message from Co-hosts of the UN
2023 Water Conference

05

Message from Ambassador Peter
Thomson, the UN Secretary-General's
Special Envoy for the Ocean

07

Message from Co-hosts of the
2025 UN Ocean Conference

08

Updates from the Community of
Ocean Action (COA): Marine and
Coastal Ecosystems Management

09

Updates from the Community of
Ocean Action (COA): Sustainable
Fisheries

11

Voluntary Commitments in the
Spotlight

An aerial photograph showing a river winding through a lush, green forest. The river's water is a deep blue, contrasting with the vibrant green of the surrounding trees. The forest appears dense and healthy, with some lighter patches of land visible along the riverbanks.

Introduction

Photo by Petar Avramoski from Pexels

Ecosystem connectivity is critically important in building resilience to climate change, enhancing biodiversity and fostering economic growth. This is certainly the case with aquatic ecosystems, including both freshwater and marine, where these environments support communities and industries, provide jobs, drive the global economy, and are essential for food security and poverty alleviation.

Unchecked coastal development and disjointed planning, however, have led to unsustainable pressure on the world's oceans and waterways, resulting in pollution, biodiversity loss, warming, acidification, rising sea levels, reduced freshwater inflows and coastal erosion. Effective collaboration is crucial, breaking down silos between land, coastal and marine communities and institutions, and working across sectoral, policy and administrative borders.

The source-to-sea approach recognizes that what we do on land and in rivers, lakes, and aquifers can have impacts further downstream, along coasts and in the ocean. The interconnected nature of these systems means that drivers of ecosystem degradation must be recognized and systematically addressed in an integrated manner. Adopting a source-to-sea approach is a critical step towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6 and SDG 14.



Message from Co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference

Photo by IRA_EVA from Getty Images

The [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) will be held from 22 to 24 March at the UN headquarters in New York. The Conference is co-hosted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan. The Permanent Representatives of the co-hosts, H.E. Ms Yoka Brandt and H.E. Mr. Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat, spoke about the Conference and discussed how the world can unite for water action.

Yoka Brandt: The Kingdom of the Netherlands, with its low-lying river deltas on the North Sea and small islands in the Caribbean, was quite literally shaped by water. Over the past centuries, we have gained a lot of experience in dealing and living with water. And like others, we continuously face new challenges, such as droughts and floods, and the consequences of rising sea-levels both in Europe and the Caribbean.

Despite these challenges, water can be a convener and connector, and, if managed well, even a catalyst for equity, prosperity and sustainability.

Jonibek Hikmat: The Water Conference is a good opportunity for all of us to review and

assess the progress achieved and the gaps and constraints we faced in the implementation of these goals. It is also a good opportunity to strengthen cooperation and partnership to catalyze and accelerate water actions.

Yoka Brandt: We need a [Water Action Agenda](#) filled with bold commitments to accelerate implementation of the Water Action Decade and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Water Conference provides a unique opportunity to unite the world for water and make a difference by initiating commitments for the Water Action Agenda. With this Conference, we aim to transform our future one drop at a time, with water as the driver for Agenda 2030.

Jonibek Hikmat: This Water Action Agenda will be filled with transformative and game-changing commitments that can truly accelerate progress towards the water-related goals. We call on Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, local communities, youth and other stakeholders from all over the world to submit these commitments and put words into action.

Message from Ambassador Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean

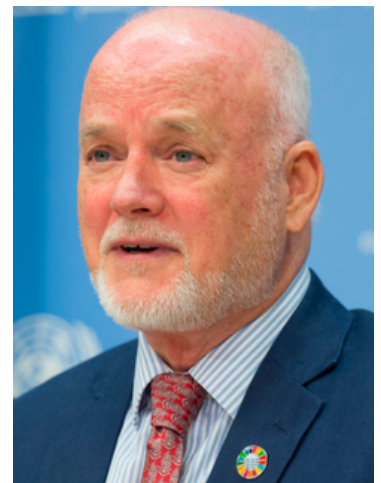
Photo by Maiteali from Getty Images
Signature

Water is life and the vast majority of it is contained within the ocean. Through the hydrological cycle of evaporation, condensation, precipitation and percolation, the flow between salt and fresh water is eternal. As such the linkage between SDG 14 and SDG 6 is irrevocable.

In these times of climate change and global warming, we are already witnessing the changes being brought upon the hydrological cycle by anthropogenic greenhouse gases and global warming. Weather patterns are changing, giving rise to extreme events of flooding, landslips, droughts and cyclonic storms. Sea levels are rising, leading to loss of land and groundwater salinization. Thus, any consideration of fresh water availability on land must consider what is happening in the ocean, and in that regard this month's UN Water Conference in New York comes immediately to mind.

Meanwhile our terrestrial activities pollute city drains, streams and rivers with toxic substances on a one-way trip to the ocean. Nanoplastics, forever chemicals, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, the list

goes on. Chemicals may have become essential to the maintenance of our modern way of living, but at what cost, when they are poisoning our children?



The international agenda is crowded, but who can rightly say that plastic and chemical pollution, and the better governance thereof, should not have prominent places at the international conference tables around which we gather? Without any doubt, they will be high on the work programme of the 3rd UN Ocean Conference to be held in Nice in June 2025. But before that, there are many pertinent gatherings, and again I single out the UN Water Conference for in-depth consideration of the source-to-sea ethos.

In the name of utility, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, we have unleashed a plastic plague upon this planet. From the

beginning, we have seriously underestimated the effects of plastic upon the environment, upon humans and life itself. It is a plague so invasive that most of us now carry nanoplastics within us and these can cross the blood-brain barrier and the placental barrier. They carry with them endocrine disrupters, chemical pollutants, toxins and bacteria.

Aware of the need for urgent global action, at the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi a year ago, we made the decision to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to agree upon a legally binding global treaty to end the plastic pollution crisis. The Committee is hard at work and we have every right to expect a robust, workable plastics treaty to be ready for adoption by the end of next year. Keeping the public eye upon the scourge of plastic pollution and the poisons of chemical pollution will serve to raise ambition at the negotiations underway to control them, and will hopefully prevent them from being swept under a polystyrene carpet.

For the love of all that we hold dear, the decline in biodiversity and the ocean's well-being cannot be the inheritance we bequeath to our grandchildren. Intergenerational justice demands a stop to the decline, a great conservation of remaining biodiversity, and a restoring of natural ecosystems wherever and however we can.

You are invited to follow the Special Envoy's [Twitter](#), where he shares messages of solutions and strategies for achieving a healthy ocean through implementation of the SDG 14 and fidelity to the Paris Climate Agreement. More information about his work can be found on [the website](#).



Message from Co-hosts of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference


Photo by Peter Fazekas from Pexels

In the wake of the UN Ocean Conference held in Lisbon, co-organized by Portugal and Kenya, the UN General Assembly has agreed to hold a third UN Ocean Conference in 2025, to be co-hosted by Costa Rica and France, as offered by the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the President of Costa Rica, Rodrigo Chaves Robles.

France and Costa Rica have been long standing partners in the commitment to promote the sustainable management of the ocean and the improvement of marine governance. As co-chairs of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC) launched by both countries in 2019, France and Costa Rica will now seek, through the HAC, to galvanize action to implement the objective agreed at COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal to have 30 percent of the world's terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030 (or the 30X30 objective). France and Costa Rica have a historical relationship of collaboration in crucial areas of the global environmental

agenda, whether it is within the Alliance for the Conservation of Rainforests, or in the depths of our ocean, within the Blue Carbon Coalition. These concrete achievements drive us to go further and to raise common ambition for 2025 both globally and nationally. France and Costa Rica are strongly committed to the future of our planet and our ocean.

With the support of the international community, Costa Rica and France have begun an inclusive and transparent process for the preparation of the programme of the Conference, within the framework of the UN General Assembly.



Updates from the Community of Ocean Action (COA): Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Management

Photo by Samson Bush on Pexels

The Marine Mammals Management Toolkit: an Innovative Tool for the Effective Management of Marine Mammals within Marine Protected Areas. (Code 8050)

With climate change predicted to aggravate the detrimental effects of shipping, bycatch and pollution on marine mammal populations, amongst many other threats, the need for the development and implementation of effective management plans for the conservation of these species is at its highest. Marine protected areas (MPAs) have been essential in conserving and managing marine mammal populations, however, their success is often hindered by lack of resources, capacity and/or knowledge.

To tackle these threats, fill knowledge gaps and empower MPA managers, the Marine Mammal Twinning, as part of the [EU-funded Ocean Governance project](#), has designed and created a toolkit for the inclusion of marine mammals into MPA and other management plans on an international scale. The [Marine Mammals](#)

[Management toolkit](#) has recently created and launched its fourth core component – the [Community of Practice](#). This builds upon and supports the other three core components: the [Factsheets](#), [Self-Assessment Tool](#) and [Good Practices](#). The Community of Practice brings together MPA practitioners from around the world with the common goal of ensuring that marine mammals are effectively managed within marine policy frameworks. The Community of Practice is open to all, from local and small MPAs to managers of large international transboundary MPAs, as well as those in the planning and pre-establishment phase. By joining, members are able to network with fellow MPA and marine mammal experts, share good practices and lessons learnt, and exchange knowledge. The Community of Practice also provides its members access to technical resources as well as support and guidance from mentors. By joining, members support the effective management and conservation of marine mammals, help mitigate threats and protect biodiversity.



Updates from the Community of Ocean Action (COA): Sustainable Fisheries

UN Photo

New Methodology for Fish Stock Sustainability Index

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is undertaking a methodological update to compute and report on the state of world fish stocks, better aligned with national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reporting initiatives, with broader expert participation and transparency, while maintaining the crucial integrity of the time series.

Since 1971 FAO has been publishing regular analyses of the state of fish stocks, including the summary updates presented in the FAO flagship publication "The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture" biennial report. To promote consistency and comparability across time, these analyses are based on a fixed list of stocks, which account for over 70% of global fish landings, and a clear process and methodology that have only had minor adjustments since the start of the series.

However, the fisheries sector is now appreciably different compared to the

1970s. First, the dominant stocks and modes of exploitation have changed. Second, the tools and the requirements for calculating and presenting global sustainability information are constantly evolving, including the need for increasing transparency and the use of local knowledge. Finally, the emergence of SDG Indicator 14.4.1 has generated parallel monitoring processes that are worth connecting.

The new methodology will continue to generate stock status indices at the level of FAO fishing regions, where gaps in the assessment can be narrowed over time in a process of continuous improvement.

UN Decade Ecosystem Restoration

Ten World Restoration Flagships were unveiled under the banner of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a global movement coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO and designed to prevent and reverse the degradation of natural spaces across the planet. The World

Restoration Flagships aim to restore more than 68 million hectares stretch across 23 countries and all ecosystems, and create 15 million jobs.

Small Island Developing States Restoration Drive, focused on three small island developing states: Vanuatu, St Lucia and Comoros, is scaling up ridge-to-reef restoration of unique ecosystems and tapping blue economic growth to help island communities rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. This flagship aims to amplify the voice of island nations facing rising sea levels and intensifying storms because of climate change, as well as creating a “toolbox” of solutions for sustainable island development. Goals include a reduction in pressures on coral reefs, which are vulnerable to storm damage, so that fish stocks can recover. Ecosystems under restoration also include seagrass beds, mangroves and forests.

Global Closing of International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022

The International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (IYAFA 2022) global closing event will take place in hybrid format on Friday, 31 March 2023, from 12:30 to 14:00 (CET).

The event will:

- Give voice to small-scale actors;
- Share activities and achievements of IYAFA 2022 in line with the IYAFA 2022 [Global Action Plan](#);
- Present the IYAFA 2022 final report recommendations;
- Share commitments to follow-up actions;

- Launch FAO digital photo exhibition on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

Find the latest draft of the event’s agenda [here](#). [Register to participate](#).

Small-Scale Fisheries

A new [legal and policy database on small-scale fisheries](#) (SSF-LEX) that contributes to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication ([SSF Guidelines](#)) was launched last November. This database offers a comprehensive list of national policies and laws that countries have so far introduced to implement the SSF Guidelines.

Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

Last September, during the 35th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, Members endorsed the new Voluntary Guidelines on Transshipment, which aim to regulate, monitor and control transshipment to support sustainable fisheries and further close loopholes that enable fish derived from IUU fishing to enter the market. Regional workshops will take place to support countries implement the guidelines. Watch the [video explainer](#).

Global action to fight IUU fishing reached a new milestone as 100 States have now committed to the FAO’s [Agreement on Port State Measures](#).



Global Plan of Action on Aquatic Genetic Resources

The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA) was developed by FAO at the request of the members of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in response to the needs and challenges identified in the first global assessment of the status of Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (AqGR).

This voluntary and non-binding plan of action, which was developed following broad consultation, aims to promote effective management of AqGR and to make a significant contribution to food security, sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. The GPA is targeted at all stakeholders in aquaculture, with a focus on resource managers and policy makers. The first part of the GPA introduces and sets the context for the importance of AqGR to sustainable aquaculture and future food security. The second part identifies strategic priorities and recommends actions under four priority areas: i) characterization, inventory and monitoring; ii) conservation and sustainable use; iii) development of AqGR for aquaculture; and iv) policies, institutions, capacity building and cooperation.



Voluntary Commitments in the Spotlight

Photo by CliffBriggin from Getty
Images Pro

> ***Italian Partnership for Safeguard and Monitoring of Water Bodies – POA PSC Project, 50353***

The project aims to to complete and strengthen the framework of knowledge on rivers, lakes and ground waters of Italy to enhance the water quality.

The implementation methodology envisages that the basin authorities carry out, in partnership with the main national scientific institutions, research activities to fill knowledge gaps and enhance the water monitoring activities of the basin to achieve the water quality objectives of Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive).

A better management and protection of water resources will consequently allow:

- A lower influx of pollutants into the Mediterranean Sea by improving the connected water ecosystems (SDG 14.1);
- Better quality and quantity of water for human consumption and sanitation (SDG 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, SDG 3.3, 3.9);
- The conservation, restoration and sustainable management of water-related terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15.1);
- A sustainable agricultural and livestock production system and the implementation of

better and resilient agricultural practices that allow the maintenance of ecosystems, the increase in productivity and the ability to adapt to climate change, extreme weather, droughts, floods and other disasters (SDG 2.4).

> ***100 Youth-Led Water Improvement Projects through the EarthEcho Water Challenge, 49826***

The EarthEcho Water Challenge is a signature programme to equip young leaders around the world to become community scientists, testing their local surface water quality, sharing their data through the global database at monitorwater.org, and using this data to inform actions to protect local waterways.

As part of EarthEcho's mission to building a global youth movement to protect and restore the ocean, uplifting the work of 100 young leaders to improve their local surface water resources will result in both improved ecosystem health and water quality in the locations where youth projects are implemented. In coastal areas, where EarthEcho has a large following, a reduction in land-based pollution into marine ecosystems would also be anticipated.

➤ **Action Plan for the Implementation of the “Water and Nature” Declaration, [49776](#)**

The “Water and Nature” Declaration is an initiative launched by the World Water Council, International Network of Basin Organizations, International Office for Water and The Nature Conservancy.

The Declaration calls its signatories, including companies and decision-makers, to restore natural resources and ecosystems, contributing to sustainable development.

The objectives of the “Water and Nature” Declaration are to:

- Strengthen the links between the water and nature communities to enable effective policies and practices;
- Promote the use of Nature-based Solutions by water practitioners;
- Stimulate global and political momentum for the financing and implementation of Nature-based Solutions.

The Declaration aims to receive the support of up to 150 signatory organizations from 50 countries, with a call for action to implement and fund projects in line with the definition of Nature-based Solutions.

The rationale of the declaration is that there is “no water security without ecological security, and no ecological security without water security”. In other words, it recognizes and emphasizes the strong interlinkages between water and ecosystems, and hence the fact that SDG 6 on water and the biodiversity SDGs (14 for marine ecosystems and 15 for terrestrial ecosystems) are tightly intertwined.

Other Voluntary Commitments

- Sweden Commits SEK 8 Billion (USD 800 million) for Sweden’s Global Development Cooperation for Environment, Climate and Biodiversity, 2022-2026, [47750](#)
- Sea’ties – Adapting Coastal Cities to Tackle Sea-Level Rise, [45730](#)
- Dutch Fund for Climate and Development – Climate Investor 2, [50167](#)
- International Living Lakes Network – We Save the Lakes of the World, [49842](#)
- Innovation in Water Governance – Breaking Boundaries for Water and Climate, [50340](#)



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