



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Turning the tide on the freshwater biodiversity crisis

22 March, 11-12:15am EDT, Nature Hub

Organized by:

German NGO Forum on Environment and Development (FUE),
Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA),
German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS),
International Rivers (IR),
Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (IUCN),
Plant for the Planet (P4P),
Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF),
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Background on the event

Freshwater biodiversity holds an intrinsic value, but more importantly represents the very foundation of water and food security, climate resilience and equal living conditions in the context of sustainable development. Nevertheless, we are losing habitats and species diversity at unprecedented rates: Since 1970, 83% of freshwater populations, 88% of freshwater megafauna and 76% of migratory fish have been extinguished – twice the rate of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. This side event aimed to discuss measures to accelerate the achievement of SDG 6.6 and to highlight approaches to upscale restoration efforts and safeguard water-related ecosystems.

Water Action Agenda

The side event raised the interactive dialogue 3 in various regards, especially concerning biodiversity, resilience and climate action. Partaking organizations are involved in the following aspects of the Water Action Agenda:

<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/freshwater-challenge-0>
<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/action-support-un-freshwater-challenge>
<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/mobilizing-global-water-resilience-community>
<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/bringing-our-rivers-back-life>

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- Implications of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for SDG 6.6,
- Interlinkages of the Water Action Decade with the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration,
- International funding of freshwater biodiversity and innovative financing initiatives,
- Incentives for scaling up nature-based solutions,
- Stakeholder collaboration beyond the usual suspects like the Freshwater Challenge,
- Human-rights based and indigenous approaches to ecosystem restoration.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Integrate human and indigenous rights in the implementation of freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration.
- Mainstream and highlight importance of freshwater biodiversity in all measures of ecosystem protection and restoration, e.g. forest landscape restoration.
- Support the freshwater challenge to restore 300,000 km of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands by 2030.
- Enable cross-sectoral and cross-ministerial exchange to reduce barriers within governments and societies making a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.
- Enhance knowledge transfer and monitoring efforts, create financial incentives and calculate the true cost of water, make polluters pay and raise water quality standards.
- Conserve water wilderness and freshwater biodiversity for its intrinsic value.