

# UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

## Protecting our planet's waters, protecting life: the role of criminal law

**Date of event:** 23rd March

**Time:** 13:00 New York

**Other time zones:** 07:00 Honolulu / 11:00 Boulder / 12:00 Quito / 13:00 Toronto /  
17:00 London / 23:00 Dhaka / 04:00 Port Vila (next day)

### Organised by:

Co-hosted by: Republic of Vanuatu & Stop Ecocide Foundation

Organised by: Stop Ecocide International

In association with partners: Earth Law Center, Youth 4 Ecocide Law, Royal Scottish Geographical Society, Mana Pacific, Gallifrey Foundation, Planète Amazone, Alliance of Mother Nature's Guardians.

### Background on the event

Given that existing environmental protections are often not adhered to or are poorly enforced, a growing number of voices are requesting stronger legal frameworks and accountability. The legal recognition of "ecocide" (severe and either widespread or long-term harm to ecosystems) as a crime at the international level is the perfect tool to prevent threats to the Earth's primary life source – water. This event addressed the importance of ecocide law to protect water ecosystems all around the globe, drawing together perspectives from youth, indigenous voices, finance, law, advocacy and sustainable business.

### Water Action Agenda

[To accelerate, via diplomatic convening and building of cross-sector networks and collaborations, the introduction of enhanced and enforceable legal protections for water \("ecocide law"\) into international, national and regional legislative frameworks | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#)

## Key Issues discussed

- In the rush for growth and development, our globally dominant economic culture has lost touch with a basic understanding: Water is life.
- The world's most climate-vulnerable countries are not the ones *directly* responsible for ecosystem breakdowns.
- Speakers highlighted the pollution and climate issues affecting water systems in different countries and regions, from Bangladesh to the Amazon, the Pacific and the Arctic.
- Environmental laws are largely anthropocentric: natural resources are interpreted as means to human ends.
- Consideration was given to how particular situations could be improved by establishing a criminal law of ecocide.
- We are creating irreparable damage to Nature due to a societal mindset of 'separation', 'competition' and 'domination'.
- International criminal law has a forward-looking preventative power, one that extends beyond and across jurisdictional boundaries. Its nature is to protect, to create the necessary global framework for decision-makers to exercise proper due diligence.
- The rule of law is foundational as it is all that stands between peace and instability, such as climate resilience and catastrophe.

## Key recommendations for action

- Criminalise ecocide as the 5<sup>th</sup> international crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Recognise 'ecocide' as a crime at the international level to prevent widespread or severe harm to Nature.
- Make sure to keep informed on issues related to the ecosystem and climate breakdown and spread the voice.
- 'You don't have to do everything to do something'. Join other movements or groups to continuing push for change.
- In terms of Youth voice, join the Youth Ecocide Law Network through the Ecocide Law website.