



The opening ceremony of the UN 2023 Water Conference – Photo credit: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

... to ensure a safe and healthy planet for all.

UN DESA helped Member States and global stakeholders in accelerating the synergistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, grounded by firm commitments and pledges, capacity-building support and strong partnerships across the world.

UN DESA ...

- Led the organization of UN 2023 Water Conference to accelerate water action and integrated water management, including through the pledges announced in the Water Action Agenda.
- Continued to foster stronger connections between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement by co-convening the Fourth Global Conference on Climate and SDG Synergies and by hosting more than 130 events at the SDG Pavilion at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27).
- Supported the implementation of commitments made at the

2021 UN High-level Dialogue on Energy by organizing the SDG 7 Action Forum and providing policy analysis to make progress on achievement of SDG 7.

- Reinforced implementation of the outcomes of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, through organization of events to highlight the need for financing and partnerships to support voluntary pledges.
- Continued to support Member States in implementing the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 to safeguard the world's forests for the well-being of people and the planet.

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ENDING THE WAR ON NATURE

As policymakers strive to urgently address the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, they are becoming increasingly aware of the need to simultaneously address the interrelated challenges of poverty, inequality, the energy crisis, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy, as well as protect key natural resources such as freshwater, the ocean, and forests. UN DESA continued to support countries in addressing these challenges by ensuring synergistic and integrated policymaking and action globally.

A new chapter in accelerating water action

UN DESA led the organization of the UN 2023 Water Conference in March 2023, which opened a new chapter in accelerating water action and integrating water management in response to climate change and the full range of sustainable development challenges. A key outcome of the Conference was the Water Action Agenda, a compendium of voluntary pledges that were announced or registered in the lead-up to and during the Conference. More than 800 commitments have been published, which reflect the collective ambition of the international community for water action in support of SDG 6 and its linkages with a broad range of other SDGs.

The Conference, co-hosted by the governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan, with UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua serving as the Conference Secretary-General, featured five interactive dialogues and over 500 side events held at the UN, around New York City and online.

UN DESA also facilitated a dialogue to review the important links between water and climate action. Co-chaired by the governments of Egypt and Japan, the interactive dialogue on Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment explored ways in which climate change negatively affects both water supply, in terms of availability, quantity and quality, as well as water demand, and the challenges of mobilizing financial resources to build and maintain resilient infrastructure. The dialogue emphasized the need to further integrate water actions in the upcoming 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), ensuring more innovation and better access to finance for resilience and adaptation.

In addition, the side events organized by Member States, intergovernmental organizations, UN entities and various stakeholders provided a valuable opportunity for all participants, including young leaders, to exchange best practices, solutions and challenges, while fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships. In addition to

focusing on climate-smart acceleration of SDG 6, the side events highlighted the importance of mobilizing action and funding to ensure climate-resilient water and sanitation services. The particular challenges for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in ensuring sustainable water management as part of their climate adaptation plans also was highlighted.

Building on the momentum generated by the Water Conference, in July 2023, a special event on SDG 6 and the Water Action Agenda was held during the HLPF. Co-hosted by UN DESA and UN-Water, the event provided an analysis of water-related progress across sectors and across other SDGs and global frameworks, showcased the success stories and lessons learned, and generated new commitments to the Water Action Agenda.



To foster stronger connections between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, UN DESA hosted

its fifth SDG Pavilion during COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Bringing together practitioners from international organizations, Member States and diverse stakeholders, the SDG Pavilion featured a record 130-plus events organized by almost 140 partners from more than 90 countries. The events included in-person and online participation on Facebook, where dynamic fireside chats with experts were streamed live. The Pavilion's inauguration was attended by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, underscoring the fact that the climate agenda and the 2030 Agenda share the same interlinked goals. Through this platform, UN DESA shared its expertise in critical areas such as energy, forests, the ocean, transport, water and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

To enhance the momentum for action, UN DESA and UNFCCC are jointly initiating the preparation of the First Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergies, to be launched in September 2023.



A view of a #WaterAction sign at UN Headquarters during the UN 2023 Water Conference – Photo credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

This report is being prepared by a diverse group of 14 experts and aims to provide empirical evidence and forward-looking recommendations to accelerate synergistic climate and SDG action while transitioning toward more just and equitable societies.

To further link and synergize the two agendas, UN DESA collaborated with UNFCCC to host a side event during the 58th meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies in Bonn in June 2023. This event shed light on the benefits of synergistic action to amplify results and to support countries in replicating successes.

Additionally, UN DESA and UNFCCC organized the Fourth Global Conference on Synergizing the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement in July 2023 as a special event during the HLPF, aiming to mainstream the climate agenda within the review and follow-up processes of the SDGs. The event convened high-level representatives from Member States and international organizations, along with experts and practitioners from across the globe. In total, more than 400 in-person and nearly 4,000 virtual participants from 140 countries participated at the event.

Looking ahead, UN DESA will continue to advance this integrated agenda in key forums, including the SDG Summit, the UNFCCC Regional Climate Weeks and COP28 in Dubai, to drive action and collaboration towards achieving the SDGs and addressing climate-related challenges.

Securing a clean energy future

UN DESA, as the secretariat of UN-Energy, convened the EnergyNow SDG 7 Action Forum in September

2022 to follow-up on the commitments made by world leaders during the High-level Dialogue on Energy in 2021 to accelerate energy access and the energy transition. Held on the sidelines of the high-level week of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, leaders from the UN, national governments and civil society discussed challenges and opportunities during the past year and took stock of progress on the more than 185 voluntary Energy Compact commitments, worth over USD 600 billion.

To inform intergovernmental dialogue on energy, UN DESA continues to drive policy analysis on progress towards achieving SDG 7. The multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group, convened by UN DESA, launched the SDG 7 Policy Briefs 2023 together with Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report at a special event at the HLPF on 11 July 2023. In support of the HLPF, the SDG 7 Policy Briefs each year provide policy recommendations towards achieving SDG 7, placing a special focus on energy's interlinkages with other SDGs and on regional challenges. Together with UN-Energy, the Department also mobilized technical guidance and recommendations through the Global Expert Group Meeting held in May 2023. Together, these analyses and recommendations served as the basis for strong engagement of Member States in ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Furthermore, UN DESA also organized events, including a symposium and various webinars, to build capacity for integrated water and energy solutions that also respond to broader sustainable development challenges, such as fostering

innovation and clean technologies for climate change and biodiversity, promoting circular economies, enhancing regional cooperation towards climate resilience, and developing sustainable cities and human settlements. These capacity-building efforts benefited representatives from key stakeholders including governments, civil society, the private sector and practitioners.

Delivering on commitments to restoring and sustainably using the ocean

UN DESA has been leading in the implementation of the outcomes and follow-up of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, for which it served as secretariat. The Conference was a major milestone that heralded a new chapter of global ocean action, featuring scaled up actions, new innovative partnerships, science-informed policies and a whole-of-society approach to

effectively implement SDG 14. The ocean sits at the nexus of the triple planetary crisis plaguing our world – climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution – and underpins many SDGs including food security, poverty eradication, gender equality, and economic growth.

In response to the concern raised by many delegations during the Ocean Conference that SDG 14 remains the most underfunded of the 17 goals, UN DESA organized a side event during COP27 in Egypt, on financing for SDG 14. In collaboration with UN-Oceans, UN DESA also organized a side event focusing on source-to-sea in the margins of the UN Water Conference, making clear the interlinkages between freshwater (SDG 6) and saltwater (SDG 14), and promoting policy integration and coordination across freshwater and marine sectors to tackle challenges across aquatic ecosystems. Looking



UN Secretary-General António Guterres speaks at the SDG Pavilion at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. – Photo credit: UNFCCC

ahead, the Department has begun preparations for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, together with the co-hosts France and Costa Rica.

UN DESA also manages the online registry of voluntary ocean commitments and facilitates the implementation of the pledges through partnerships and networks, such as the Communities of Ocean Action. The first two UN Ocean Conferences amassed more than 2,000 voluntary commitments from governments, the UN system, the private sector, academia, NGOs, and civil society for concrete initiatives and actions to advance the implementation of SDG 14. Billions of dollars were pledged by philanthropic organizations and multilateral development banks during the 2022 Ocean Conference to address the deteriorating health of the ocean and sustainable use of marine resources. Currently, there are about 2,800 pledged actions on the SDG Action Platform managed by the Department, making SDG 14 the most registered

goal among the 17 SDGs. By actively engaging with governments and other stakeholders, UN DESA ensures that the pledges made during the conferences translate into tangible actions, bringing about positive change for our ocean.

Recognizing forest-based solutions for sustainable development

Throughout the year, UN DESA continued to support Member States to safeguard the world's forests for the well-being of people and the planet through implementing the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030, a global framework for forest action.

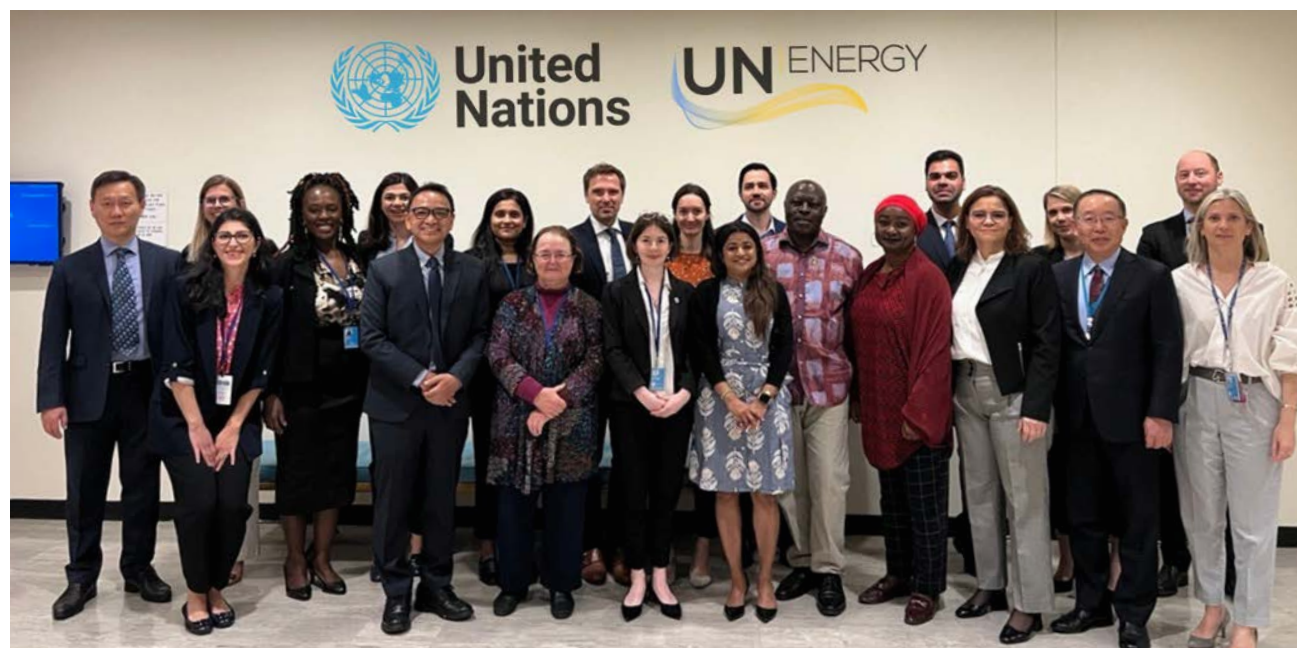
In May 2023, delegates took stock of progress towards the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) of the Strategic Plan at the 18th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, organized by DESA. Several key opportunities and challenges were identified at the Forum, including: interlinkages with

the SDGs under review at the 2023 HLPF and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; emerging issues related to forests, energy and livelihoods; challenges related to mobilizing forest financing, and the need to strengthen cooperation and collaboration including through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). With the participation of around 400 representatives from Member States, UN system, other intergovernmental organizations, regional and sub regional entities and other stakeholders, the Forum also highlighted how the 2023 International Day of Forests and its theme of “forests and health” shed light on the importance of forests for all aspects of health, from clean air and water to providing food, fuel, medicine, and income.

UN DESA also supported countries in the development of comprehensive reporting frameworks for monitoring and assessing progress toward the achievement of the GFGs. For example, the Department ensured increased consistency in

international forest-related data and reporting by organizing a capacity-development workshop in March 2023, together with FAO, focusing on sharing knowledge and national experiences among experts from countries and CPF member organizations.

Furthermore, at COP27 in November 2022 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, UN DESA and FAO jointly held the High-level Dialogue of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, which brought together heads and principals of the participating member organizations to discuss actions, transparency and finance to accelerate global efforts in turning the tide on deforestation. UN DESA also supported the preparations for the Mid-term Review of the International Arrangement on Forests in 2024, to review progress to date, and to consider how the Partnership could provide greater support to the work of the Forum and countries in strengthening their implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.



Members of UN-Energy gather in New York in May 2023 - Photo credit: UN DESA



18th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests - Photo credit: UN DESA