

United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028
New York, 22–24 March 2023

Agenda Item 9. Interactive Dialogue - Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Statement

Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

Almost all water used for human consumption is drawn directly or indirectly from wetlands, which contribute to keeping drinking water clean and safe, provide water for food crops, help ensure the safety and wellbeing of people by buffering water extremes, and play a critical role in regulating global and local climate.

Extensive wetland degradation and loss has put this at risk. By some estimates as much as a third of the world’s wetland area may have been lost in the few decades since the the last UN water conference.

We can not address our water and sustainable development needs without wetlands.

The UN 2023 Water Conference, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at CBD COP15 just a few months ago, provide opportunity for change – and perhaps our last genuine opportunity to turn trends before critical thresholds are crossed.

It is an opportunity to ensure that the crucial role of wetlands in the water cycle, in the climate system, and for biodiversity, is understood and recognized across society and sectors.

It needs to include radical scaling up of wetland protection and restoration, including wetlands in national target setting for 2030, integrating ambitious wetland actions in climate change mitigation and adaptation plans, and measuring progress towards our common goals through wetlands.

It needs redoubled efforts to strengthen data on wetland extent, condition, their contributions to people, and the pressures that drive wetland loss, and to ensure such data are available to and applied in decision-making.

It means redirecting incentives that currently degrade wetlands and water resources towards protecting and restoring natural capital and promoting sustainable food production.

It means increasingly making wetlands a part of sustainable, livable cities.

This requires collaboration, at international level, to fully leverage the existing governance framework in a synergistic manner, including the Convention on Wetlands as the lead partner in addressing inland water under the CBD.

It needs collaboration across all stakeholder groups, and importantly with Indigenous and local peoples that are often the best stewards of the environment.

And it means significantly increasing investment.

I hope the outcomes of this dialogue, and the UN 2023 Water Conference, will help catalyze this change.
