

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  
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Plenary, Agenda Item 8. General Debate

## **Statement**

**Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water sustains life. It is our most precious resource, but too often it is taken for granted. Too often it is seen as a commodity, without consideration of the ecosystems that provide it.

Water is the defining feature of wetlands. In fact, 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, and help ensure the safety and wellbeing of people by buffering water extremes.

Wetlands harbour exceptional biodiversity, sustaining life and livelihoods, they promote resilience and adaptation, and some wetlands are our strongest natural allies in climate change mitigation.

But wetlands are degrading at alarming rates. By some estimates we may have lost as much as a third of wetlands in the few decades since the last UN water conference at Mar-del-Plata in 1977.

Wetland loss puts people and development at risk, a risk which is exacerbated by climate change and increasingly extreme hydrological cycles. Flooding and drought events are becoming stronger, longer and more frequent. Many parts of the world are becoming more water insecure.

We can not address our water needs without wetlands. The UN 2023 Water Conference is an opportunity for change, an opportunity to ensure that the crucial role of wetlands in the water cycle, and therefore for sustainable development, is recognized across society and sectors, and fully considered in our plans and actions.

We have to harness the opportunity to radically scale up protection and restoration of nature that comes with the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including by prioritizing wetlands in 2030 target setting, as well as by measuring our success in implementing it through wetlands.

It means ensuring alignment of national sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change strategies and plans, making ambitious wetland actions part of Nationally Determined Contributions as well as National Adaptation Plans.

It means protecting and restoring wetlands as a source of water for the agricultural sector, and ensuring agriculture and other land use change does not degrade wetlands, including by

redirecting incentives that currently degrade wetlands and water resources towards protecting and restoring natural capital.

And it means making wetlands part of creating sustainable, livable cities.

These actions need to be guided by the best available knowledge and data. We need redoubled efforts to strengthen wetland inventory, so that data on wetland extent, condition, their contributions to people, and the pressures that drive loss are available to and applied in decision-making.

These actions require more effective utilization of existing financing, as well as a significant increase in investment.

They require collaboration, across all stakeholder groups, and importantly with indigenous and local peoples that are often the best stewards of the natural environment.

And they require fully leveraging the existing governance framework in a synergistic manner, including the Convention on Wetlands as the global intergovernmental agreement for natural water infrastructure.

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