



What's New?

UN member states finally [agreed on 4 March](#) on a **treaty to better protect the high seas from exploitation** – the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) ocean treaty**, after two decades of negotiations. Covering high seas, i.e. 60% of the world's oceans and seas, it is crucial for enforcing the pledge made by countries at the [UN Biodiversity Conference](#) in December to protect 30% of the sea by 2030.

- The treaty provides a legal framework for:
 - establishing vast Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other area-based management tools in the high seas to prevent the loss of wildlife, as well as for emergency measures to respond to natural or man-made disasters;
 - conducting environmental impact assessment for activities taking place in the high seas or with potential impacts on the high seas oversee industrial fishing;
 - sharing out the monetary and non-monetary benefits from genetic resources of the high seas;
 - capacity building and transfer of technologies regarding conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.
- It establishes a Conference of the Parties that will meet at regular intervals (to be determined during the CoP first meeting) and enable member states to be held to account on issues covered by the treaty.

- At the [Our Ocean Conference](#) held in Panama on 2-3 March, the EU announced [39 new commitments](#) for action in 2023, covering all 6 focus areas of the conference: marine protected areas, marine pollution, climate change, sustainable fisheries, sustainable blue economies and maritime security – including through monitoring and research programmes, with a total budget of EUR 816.5 million.
- [China approved the construction of another 106 gigawatts of coal-fired power capacity](#) last year, four times higher than a year earlier and the highest since 2015.
- [Brazil aims to take the lead in addressing climate change](#) as its new environment minister announces [new climate-centric initiatives](#).
- A group of more than 200 million farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous peoples and women's and youth movements who make up the [Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa](#) are **calling for a wide-scale shift to agroecology** to build a resilient food system on the continent.
- The U.S. Department of State has launched [a new initiative focused on improving African agricultural production](#) through climate-resilient seeds and soils, in partnership with the FAO and the African Union. The "Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils" aims to **map soils and give farmers more information** to help increase productivity and identify which crops are best suited to grow in changing climates in Africa's five sub-regions.
- [U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called](#) for **sweeping reforms to the 'biased' global financial**

system to ensure more equitable access for low-income countries vulnerable to climate disasters.

- A **new global initiative** launched in January by the World Economic Forum, called [Giving to Amplify Earth Action](#), is the latest global effort **to use philanthropic money as seed funding for climate-related initiatives** in the hopes of attracting investments from the private sector and governments.
- A USD 5 trillion investor group is proposing a change in their framework to [allow low- and middle-income countries better access to climate funding](#).
- The United Arab Emirates appointed Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, [one of the world's biggest oil companies' head to lead the COP 28 global climate talks in Dubai](#), later this year. Campaigners say he must stand down from his oil business role while president as it is a clear conflict of interest.

EU Policy Developments

NEW

- Negotiators of the Council and the European Parliament reached a [provisional agreement on the creation of European Green Bonds](#) (EuGB) on 28 February. All proceeds of EuGBs will need to be invested in economic activities that are aligned with the EU taxonomy, provided the sectors concerned are already covered by it. For those sectors not yet covered by the EU taxonomy and for certain very specific activities there will be a flexibility pocket of 15%.
- The Commission presented on 1 February a Communication on a [Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age](#). The Plan aims to support the fast transition to climate neutrality by scaling up EU's manufacturing capacity towards net-zero technologies and products required to meet Europe's ambitious climate targets, building on the European Green Deal and REPowerEU. It is based on four pillars: a predictable and simplified regulatory environment, speeding up access to finance, enhancing skills and open trade for resilient supply chains.
- The Commission adopted on 14 February a proposal for a [Regulation strengthening the CO₂ emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles](#) from 2030 onwards.
- The Commission adopted on 2 February a [Regulation to lower the maximum residues levels \(MRLs\) of two pesticides](#) in food, included imported food and feed products, in order to protect pollinators. The Regulation puts into practice the Commission's goals, announced in both the Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy, to take into account environmental aspects when assessing requests for import tolerances for pesticide substances no longer approved in the EU, while respecting WTO standards and obligations.
- The Commission adopted on 21 February a **Fisheries package** composed of a [Communication on Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management](#), an [Action plan on Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries](#) and a [Communication on the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector](#).
- The [Directive of the EP and Council regarding corporate sustainability reporting](#) was adopted on 14 December.
- The Commission adopted in December 2022 a [Communication on an EU policy framework on biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics](#).
- The Commission adopted on 30 November 2022 a [Proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union certification framework for carbon removals](#), as well as a [Proposal for a Regulation of the EP and Council on packaging and packaging waste](#).

- [Microplastics pollution – measures to reduce its impact on the environment](#)
- [Proposal for a Regulation on substantiating environmental claims](#)
- [EU framework for harmonised measurement of transport and logistics emissions](#)

New Reports and publications

- The world is on the brink of **breaching a critical climate threshold**, according to a [study](#) published on 30 January by Stanford University and Colorado State University, in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The study used artificial intelligence to predict warming timelines and provides new evidence that global warming is on track to reach 1.5 °C above pre-industrial averages in the early 2030s, regardless of how much greenhouse gas emissions rise or fall in the coming decade.
- **Half the planet's glaciers will have melted by 2100** even if humanity sticks to goals set out in the Paris climate agreement, according to a [paper](#) released in *Science* in January. It finds out that the scale and impacts of glacial loss are greater than previously thought. At least half of that loss will happen in the next 30 years.
- A [new analysis](#) published on 14 February by the US National Snow and Ice Data Center shows that **Antarctic sea ice extent set a new record low last year**. Much of the Antarctic coast is ice free, exposing the ice shelves that fringe the ice sheet to wave action and warmer conditions.
- The [Copernicus climate monitor](#) noted **extreme temperatures in 2022** in Europe, the Middle East, China, Central Asia and northern Africa, while Europe recorded its second hottest year on record.
- On a brighter note, the loss of the ozone layer, which risked exposing people to harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun, is on track to be completely recovered by 2040 across the world, aside from the polar regions, according to a [report](#) jointly produced by the World Meteorological Organization, UNEP, the European Commission and the NASA. The poles will take a little longer – the ozone layer will fully bounce back by 2045 over the Arctic and by 2066 over the Antarctic.
- A new report published on 7 February by UNEP, "[Bracing for Superbugs: Strengthening environmental action in the One Health response to antimicrobial resistance](#)", warns that pollution from livestock farming, pharmaceuticals and healthcare is **fuelling antimicrobial resistance**, as vast amounts of antimicrobials are used to treat and prevent infections in farm animals. Spills of manure and other pollution into waterways are adding to the global rise of superbugs.
- A report on "['Glocalizing' land-use and forest governance in the tropics: examining research partnerships and international forest policies affecting Brazil, DRC and Indonesia](#)" draws lessons from case studies in Indonesia, the DRC and Brazil to offer recommendations for the 'glocalization' of international mechanisms that affect land-use and forest governance in the tropics – going beyond commodity and market-based instruments and including forest-dependent peoples and entrepreneurs.
- A report published by the World Bank Group in February on "[What the Future Has in Store: A New Paradigm for Water Storage](#)" shows how freshwater storage is at the heart of adapting to climate change and sets out a new framework for integrated water storage planning. It also calls for action esp. by focusing more strategically on storage, developing integrated modelling, surface and sub-surface storage, engaging all stakeholders to define needs and associated trade-offs, incl. with the private sector.

- The [Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor 2023](#), published by the New Climate Institute in February, showed that 24 multinational companies fall well short of the required ambition and are inappropriately verified, including for the largest three global companies from eight major-emitting sectors, including only those that are members of an initiative affiliated with the Race to Zero campaign.
- The World Economic Forum defines in an [insight report](#) published in January, the components of “good” food systems, incl. the 5 dimensions of economy, livelihoods, nature, climate and nutrition/health/diets. It also provides a Food Systems Dashboard and proposes a roadmap for action.
- The [2022 Global Nutrition Report](#): “Stronger commitments for greater action” showcases the value of the Nutrition Accountability Framework, while country nutrition profiles show increasing trends in anaemia, overweight and obesity, high blood pressure and type-2 diabetes across Africa.
- Based on the findings of a [study](#) published in the Lancet Planetary Health, estimating that up to 8.4 billion people could be at risk from two major vector-borne diseases, malaria and dengue, Wellcome, one of the largest global non-profit funders for scientific research and global health, will fund 24 research teams in 12 countries to develop [new digital tools to respond to the emerging threat of climate-sensitive infectious diseases](#).

Calendar



Upcoming

- **21 March:** [International Day of Forests](#)
- **22 March:** [World Water Day](#)
- **22-24 March:** [UN Water Conference](#) in New-York
- **27-31 March:** Climate and environment week organised by DG INTPA and NEAR with EU Delegations
- **30 March:** [International Day of Zero Waste](#)
- **22 April:** [Earth Day](#)
- **1-12 May:** [Conferences of the Parties on hazardous waste, hazardous chemicals and persistent organic pollutants](#): 16th meeting of the COP to the Basel Convention (BC COP-16), 11th meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention (RC COP-11) and 11th meeting of the COP to the Stockholm Convention (SC COP-11), in Geneva
- **13 May:** [World Migratory Bird Day](#)
- **18-19 May:** [High-Level Meeting of the UNGA on the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), in New-York
- **22 May:** [International day for Biological Diversity](#)
- **29 May-2 June:** [Second session of Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment](#), in Paris
- **5 June:** [World Environment Day](#)
- **8 June:** [World Oceans Day](#)
- **15-16 June:** Global Gateway Forum
- **16-20 October:** [2023 Nutrition for Resilience Global Conference](#) “Ensuring Micronutrient Security in an Era of Complex Global Challenges”, to be held in a hybrid format in The Hague, Netherlands and online



Past

- **13-17 February:** [Cooperation Days](#), Ppt presentations are available online
- **1-2 March:** [One forest Summit](#) in Libreville, Gabon
- **9 March:** Fern event at the EP on deforestation: Together with Vice-President of the European Parliament, Heidi Hautala, MEP (Greens/EFA) and representatives for Brazil and Columbia, DDG Jager discussed the forthcoming

Deforestation Regulation with a view to sharing insights on how international partnerships and engagement will play a role in helping partner countries with implementation, including through the support of Team Europe.

Training and e-learning

Trainings, webinars, e-learning

- 🌿 [Gender mainstreaming in green sectors](#) , incl. linking the Green Deal and the Gender Action Plan III and how to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in the sectors related to the Green Deal.
- 🌿 [Sustainable Forest Management in EU International Partnerships](#): this webinar helps to understand main forest management models and how to improve their sustainability, as well as the role the EU Commission in promoting sustainable forest management in partner countries.

Still available if you’ve missed them:

- 🌿 ‘European Green Deal - Greening EU cooperation’ webinar series N°6:
 - [Webinar N°1: Water and Climate Change Adaptation](#)
 - [Webinar N°2: Forest-based value chains and wood](#)
 - [Webinar N°3: Nationally Determined Contributions & their Monitoring, reporting and verification \(MRV\) system – from the Paris Agreement on Climate](#)
 - [Webinaire N°4 : Contributions Déterminées Nationales & leur système de mesure, rapportage et vérification \(MRV\), issues de l’Accord de Paris sur le Climat](#)
 - [Webinar N°5: Transboundary water management](#)
 - [Webinar N°6: Valuing ecosystem services and the use of nature-based solutions - Embedding Biodiversity in the EU’s external cooperation](#)
- 🌿 [Greening EU Cooperation](#) – the other 5 series of webinars
- 🌿 The [E-course on Circular Economy](#) (5 modules)

Tools available

- [FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment](#) (FRA) provides essential information for understanding the extent of forest resources, their condition, management and uses. You can find an interactive platform and map under [FRA 2020](#), which examines the status of, and trends in, more than 60 forest-related variables in 236 countries and territories over the period 1990–2020.
- Complementing this information, the [Global Forest Watch](#) created by the World Resources Institute is an online platform with the best available data about forests.
- The [Regreening Africa landscape portal](#) shows spatial data layers, maps and documents corresponding to the EU-funded EVA project, aimed at halting and reversing land degradation, improving smallholder livelihoods, food security and resilience to climate change in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa, by restoring ecosystem services.

Green tip #15 – Move towards a greener spring!

As spring is approaching, you can get help nature by your mobility choices:

- Choose **public transport** whenever possible.
- When the weather allows it, try **cycling or walking** to work, your health will also benefit from it!

- If you do need to drive, consider **carpooling**, organise it with neighbours or other parents to drive children to school, etc. You can also find rides on the [Belgian carpooling platform](#).

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