

CLIMATE ACTION

The COVID-19 pandemic represents the biggest shock faced by the world in decades. Yet, over the long term, climate change portends even more devastating impacts. UN DESA continues to advocate for urgent efforts for sustainable development that go hand-in-hand with climate action in a way that leaves no one behind.

UN DESA...

- Showcased the important and intricate links between climate action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the SDG Pavilion during COP 25.
- Supported the development of a new 10-year vision for the revitalized UN-Energy in support of the SDG Decade of Action and the Paris Agreement.
- Helped countries to develop their capacity in monitoring progress towards sustainable forest management and in mobilizing forest financing.
- Continued to lead the support to UN Member States in the implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028.
- Continued coordinating and collaborating with the nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action (COAs).

*Daffodils starting to grow with Spring arriving
– Photo Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten*

Climate action

2020 was meant to be a landmark year for climate action and the SDGs. While ushering in a decade of ambitious action to deliver the SDGs by 2030, governments were also preparing to enhance their climate ambitions through updated nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the deepening of inequities it has left in its wake, have heightened the urgency of effectively mitigating the climate crisis. The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement can serve as a compass to help policy makers meet urgent needs while aligning short-term solutions to medium and long-term climate and sustainable development objectives. UN DESA is moving the needle forward for harnessing synergies across development and climate action.



USG Liu Zhenmin delivers remarks at an event at UN DESA's SDG Pavilion at COP25 in Madrid. - Photo Credit: UN DESA/Isabel Raya

Harnessing climate and SDGs synergies

UN DESA showcased the interlinkages between climate action and sustainable development at the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25), held in Madrid, Spain, in December 2019. At its SDG Pavilion, the

Department featured more than 50 events, over 200 panellists and close to 1,000 participants.

Among the events were a series of capacity building workshops on water and energy interlinkages at COP25, organized together with Itaipu Binacional, a global leader in hydropower generation. The workshops featured case



Participants listen and participate in sessions at UN DESA's SDG Pavilion at COP 25 in Madrid. - Photo Credit: UN DESA/Isabel Raya.



UN DESA team at COP25 – Photo Credit: UN DESA/Division for Sustainable Development Goals

studies illustrating how specific actions, projects and programmes around hydropower are moving the SDGs and climate action forward on multiple dimensions.

In follow-up to the launch of the Health and Energy Platform of Action (HEPA), at the Climate Action Summit in September 2019, UN DESA, together with HEPA partners, WHO, the UNDP and the World Bank, organized a high-level event at the SDG Pavilion at COP25. Outcomes of the event highlighted the need for political and financial commitments, enhanced multi-sectoral actions, increased attention to the climate opportunities from clean cooking, as well as the importance of making available affordable clean cooking that meets the needs of billions of

households around the world. HEPA aims to help countries strengthen operation between the health and energy sectors.

As global priorities quickly shifted toward curbing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and shaping an effective recovery, UN DESA, in collaboration with UNFCCC, hosted a three-part virtual conference, *Harnessing Climate & SDGs Synergies to Recover Better and Stronger from the COVID-19 Pandemic*, in May and June 2020. Hundreds of experts and practitioners joined to learn how countries and stakeholders are advancing synergetic implementation of climate action and SDGs in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supporting clean energy transitions with universal energy access

UN DESA supported intergovernmental processes in the areas of energy to support UN General Assembly committees, the HLPF and the implementation of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024. As the Secretariat of UN-Energy, UN DESA supported the development of a new 10-year vision for the revitalized UN-Energy in support of the SDG Decade of Action and the Paris Agreement, by providing interagency coordination and support to its Co-Chairs, Achim Steiner, the Administrator of UNDP and Damilola Ogunbiyi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All. The Department has also begun the preparations for the High-Level Dialogue on Energy to

be held in 2021, with the Under-Secretary-General of UN DESA serving as the Dialogue Secretary-General and the UN-Energy Co-Chairs acting as the Dialogue Co-Chairs.

Convened by UN DESA, the more than 40-member multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group delivered a series of policy briefs on Accelerating SDG 7 achievement in the time of COVID-19 to inform intergovernmental discussions on universal access and clean energy transitions. UN DESA also co-developed the **Tracking SDG 7: Energy Progress Report 2020**. Prepared in partnership with other global custodians for SDG7 indicators, the report presents comprehensive coverage and in-depth analysis of over 180 countries of their progress toward universal energy access and clean energy solutions.

Energy Transition: Leaving No One Behind – Taking Action, Climate Action Summit 2019 – Photo Credit: UN DESA/Predrag Vasic





Baby Birds in Nest – Photo Credit: UN DESA Forest Photo Competition/ Prasetyo Nurramdhan

Promoting global sustainable transport

The UN Sustainable Transport Conference, originally scheduled for 5-7 May 2020 in Beijing, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. UN DESA, led by its Under-Secretary-General as the Conference Secretary-General, continued to mobilize all stakeholders and strengthen thought leadership to promote sustainable transport, including through inter-agency report analyses, webinars and discussions in related fora.

Promoting forests' contributions to global sustainable development

UN DESA continues to lead global efforts in support of the international forest policy dialogue, helping countries to develop their capacity in monitoring progress towards

sustainable forest management and in mobilizing forest financing. The Department's work on forests directly supports the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 and the UN Forest Instrument and is guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global agreements.

The Department campaigned on the International Day of Forests (21 March), by promoting the importance of forests and biodiversity as its central theme. The campaign hashtag #IntlForestDay was featured in over 17,000 tweets by 11,000 contributors during the International Day, with 163 million timeline deliveries, and over 82 million accounts reached, according to estimates.

UN DESA coordinated a system-wide vision among 15



Forest cover in India – Photo Credit: UN DESA /Mita Sen

international forest-related organizations and conventions on advancing coherent implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. In January 2020, heads and principals of fifteen members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests agreed on the Strategic Vision Towards 2030, with specific objective and strategic priorities to implement UNSPF, its Global Forest Goals, and as well as other major forest-related commitments by 2030. Specific steps were also taken to operationalize the first phase of the clearing house of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network to provide information on the opportunities for financing sustainable forest management, facilitate access to related data and information, and to assess the progress towards target 15.b of SDG15, which calls for financing and incentivizing sustainable forest management, and

supporting developing countries in implementation.

In June 2020, the 15th session of the UN Forum on Forests successfully adopted an omnibus resolution that charted the way forward in some of the key areas of Forum's work, including national reporting, means of implementation, capacity development, and thematic priorities for the upcoming biennium. UN DESA provided effective support to the three-month long intensive consultative process, which included three rounds of written inputs and numerous virtual consultations.

Protecting our ocean

UN DESA has been coordinating and collaborating with the nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action (COAs) to follow-up on the implementation



Atlantic Coast of Barbados. - Photo Credit: UN DESA/Astrid Hurley



Submission to UN DESA Forest Photo Contest. - Photo Credit: Martin Schubert

of the voluntary commitments made at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference and to mobilize new voluntary commitments for the upcoming UN Ocean Conference. A variety of actors has so far made 1,600 pledges of ocean action and the list is still growing. The Department has organized workshops and webinars for the COAs to share best practices and experiences provide partnership opportunities and to catalyse additional pledges for ocean action. The quarterly Ocean Action Newsletter produced by the Department further promotes the work of the COAs and provides updates about the upcoming UN Ocean Conference and ocean news from around the UN system.

To showcase the intricate and symbiotic link between ocean and climate change, UN DESA has also been supporting the Governments of Kenya and Portugal to organize for the UN Ocean Conference and its preparatory meetings. Although the Conference has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department, in collaboration with related UN entities, continued to inform the UN senior leadership in addressing climate change and its impacts on the ocean as one of the most significant

challenges to achieving the 2030 Agenda and SDG 14. UN DESA also offered steadfast support throughout the year to the efforts of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Peter Thomson.

Promoting water for sustainable development

UN DESA is leading the support to UN Member States in the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028. The Department highlighted the important link between climate change and water by co-hosting several events, including at the margins of the General Assembly High-level Event on Climate Change, the HLPF, and the high-level week of the 74th General Assembly. UN DESA is also coordinating the preparation towards the 2023 UN Conference on the Water Action Decade, together with UN-Water, the Government of Portugal and the Government of Tajikistan. In collaboration with UN-Water, UN DESA has also supported the development of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework to elevate water and sanitation issues within the UN System, as part of the Decade of Action launched by the UN Secretary-General.