



PROTECTING OUR PLANET

© David Troeger on Unsplash

... for present and future generations.

Through its support to the High-level Dialogue on Energy, the Second Global Sustainable Transport Conference, United Nations Ocean Conference and the UN Forum on Forests, among others, the Department moved forward the essential truth that the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are closely interlinked, and they require multistakeholder partnership and collaboration to be implemented.

UN DESA ...

- Continued implementation of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024, leading in the preparations for the High-level Dialogue on Energy and moving forward its Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG 7 Action.
- Continued its work to improve sustainable transport via the UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference.
- Reinforced ocean action and global efforts to achieve SDG

14 by playing a leading role in organizing the UN Ocean Conference, a crucial event for encouraging all stakeholders to use marine resources sustainably.

- Strengthened further the interlinkages between the SDGs and the Paris Agreement through events hosted at the SDG Pavilion at COP26.
- Ensured that forests are at the centre of resiliency plans and efforts to improve preparedness.

05

PROTECTING OUR PLANET

The Secretary-General's words on the state of the planet have never been stronger: "There is one thing that threatens all our progress – the climate crisis. Unless we act now, we will not have a liveable planet." As he implores the world to end its "senseless and suicidal war against nature," UN DESA has stepped up its work to better connect the shared goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement and streamline global efforts towards both. There is no more time to wait—we must take action now to enact smart policies and build lasting partnerships to manage sustainably our forests and ocean, and bring people the clean water and energy required for a liveable planet today and in the future.

Safeguarding life below water

Healthy oceans are the foundation of climate regulation and sustainable development, yet the planet's marine ecosystems continue to be under threat from rising sea levels, pollution, ocean acidification and habitat loss. At the same time ocean-based economies and communities have also been deeply impacted by

the COVID-19 pandemic, causing setbacks in ongoing efforts in ocean management, monitoring and science. The UN Ocean Conference was held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 27 June to 1 July 2022 to galvanise global action to save our ocean under the theme "Scaling Up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions". DESA was involved in all aspects of the conference



from supporting the intergovernmental negotiations, to preparing background documentation, gathering voluntary commitments, and coordinating all aspects of the programme in close cooperation with other UN departments including Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and Department of Global Communications. More than 6,000 participants from 150 countries, including 24 Heads of State and Government and over 2,000 representatives of civil society participated in the conference.

In addition to the plenary sessions, the UN Ocean Conference featured eight interactive dialogues, which provided deep dives into areas such as addressing marine pollution, minimizing and addressing ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming, and promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for small island developing States and least developed countries. There were also four special events and more than 250 side events. The special events focused on youth-led innovation, the sustainable blue economy, fresh- and saltwater interlinkages, and ocean action at the local and regional level. Amongst the outputs of the conference, countries agreed on an action plan that calls for a collective global response to addressing the ocean's degradation. The Lisbon Declaration, "Our ocean, our future, our responsibility," was adopted at the closing plenary, which set out specific science-based and innovative actions, taking into account the capacity challenges of developing countries. DESA also helped to coordinate an SDG Media Zone in collaboration with the Department of Global Communications, the PVBLIC Foundation and media partners, which brought together UN principals, influencers including actor Jason Momoa and industry leaders to talk about innovative solutions and initiatives that address the global challenges facing the ocean and advanced discussions out of the policy sphere and into the public discourse through a live format of interviews and panel discussions.

"Going forward, it will be important that we renew our focus on ocean action. We need to do this by focusing on improving the scientific basis for our decisions, by



improving the science-policy interface, and by engaging in scientific partnerships that build capacity through mutual learning,"
- UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, Liu Zhenmin.

Healthy forests are key to building a resilient future

The vital role of forests in securing a greener future for people and planet was highlighted at the 17th session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF17), held from 9 to 13 May 2022. Around 300 representatives from governments, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional organizations, major groups and other stakeholders, came together to share their experiences in sustainable forest management. The forum emphasized the role of forests in addressing many challenges, from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to the impacts of a changing climate and biodiversity loss. UNFF17 adopted an omnibus resolution which identified actions to be taken by the forum in its key areas of work, including on implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030; means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN); monitoring, assessment, and reporting; and preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) in 2024.



The forum stressed the need to accelerate efforts towards achieving the Global Forest Goals by 2030. Delegates emphasized the need to support countries in their effort to strengthen their national policy frameworks on forests, including for forest restoration readiness and to improve access to technologies, capacity building and forest finance, including climate finance. The need for robust data on tracking progress towards the Global Forest Goals was noted and the importance of supporting countries in their voluntary national reporting was highlighted in this regard.

Unleashing the power of natural resources for the 2030 Agenda

Sustainable management of natural resources, which plays a critical role in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, was the focus of the ECOSOC Special Meeting on Natural Resources in March 2022. The issue of natural resources cuts across the pillars of the work of the United Nations and collaboration on sustainable management

of natural resources among the intergovernmental bodies can foster economic and social development and promote peace by preventing the use of natural resources as a cause of conflict. Given the complexities involved, sustainable management of natural resources requires a whole-of-society approach. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, including its tripartite arrangement, has been instrumental in reducing the trade of illicit diamonds and promoting legitimate rough diamond trade. Its principles and objectives could inform an inclusive and sustainable approach to transform extractive industries. Furthermore, sustainable management of natural resources should also entail the promotion of value addition, which would be instrumental for addressing inequalities within and between countries.

Securing a clean energy future

The Secretary-General convened the High-level Dialogue on Energy in September 2021. As the first global summit-level meeting on energy under the auspices of the UN General

Assembly in 40 years, the dialogue was a historic opportunity to catalyse bold action to ensure access to clean and affordable energy services for all by 2030, while accelerating the energy transition towards net-zero emissions by 2050. Under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin, as Secretary-General of the high-level dialogue, UN DESA functioned as Secretariat, helping in the preparation of the event and aiding in the development of a Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG 7 Action. More than 100 Member States, including 30 Heads of State and Government, participated in this event, which was followed by almost 1,500 viewers worldwide. Over 150 Energy Compacts comprised of voluntary commitments by governments, private sector and civil society were announced. Together, these commitments sum-up to more than US\$400 billion in new finance and investment towards SDG 7 and securing a net-zero carbon emission future.

The Global Roadmap sets an aggressive timeline to ensure that 500 million more people gain access to electricity by 2025, and 1 billion more people gain access to clean cooking solutions. It also calls for fossil fuel consumption subsidies to be re-directed towards renewable energy and energy efficiency; a 100% increase in modern renewables capacity globally; a doubling of annual investment in renewables and energy efficiency globally; and 30 million jobs to be created in renewable energy and energy efficiency. These will help ensure an inclusive, green recovery by investing in poverty reduction, health, education and social protection.

Furthermore, UN DESA launched two reports in June, [Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2022](#) and the [SDG7 Policy Briefs 2022: Addressing Energy's Interlinkages with other SDGs](#). The Department held an event in June to promote the report's key findings. The event was co-hosted by the Co-Chairs of



the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy, with participation from Anne Beathe Tvinnereimopen, the Norwegian Minister of International Development, Damilola Ogunbiyi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All and Co-Chair of UN-Energy, Usha Rao-Monari, Associate Administrator of UNDP, Riccardo Puliti, World Bank Vice-President for Infrastructure, and others.

Promoting sustainable mobility of people and goods

The Second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference was held from 14 to 16 October 2021 in Beijing, China, under the overall theme of “Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Development”. The Secretary-General and seven Heads of State and Government addressed the conference (China, Ethiopia, the Netherlands, Panama, Russia, Turkmenistan and Zimbabwe), as well

as 44 Ministers and other high-level government representatives. Approximately 1,000 participants representing more than 130 governments, 43 UN system entities and IGOs and about 200 stakeholders from the business sector, scientific community and civil society joined the event in person. The livestream coverage of the meetings has received more than 30,000 views to date.

The conference featured opening and closing ceremonies, three high-level plenary sessions, a Ministers’ Forum, a Science Technology and Innovation Forum, and a Business Forum. Six thematic sessions with robust multi-stakeholder participation were also held on various aspects related to sustainable transport, including poverty eradication, COVID-19 economic recovery, and climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. The deliberations were further enriched by 27 virtual side events and an onsite exhibition.



The conference was opened and closed by Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin, as Conference Secretary-General, who also co-chaired two plenary sessions, spoke at the Ministers’ Forum and thematic session 5 on transport policies and delivered opening and closing press-conferences. Throughout the discussions, key features of sustainable transport – universal and affordable access, improved safety, greater efficiency, enhanced resilience and lowered environmental impact – were presented not as an end in itself, but as an essential means to achieve the SDGs and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. All modes of transport—road, rail, aviation and waterborne—were addressed. The urgency of decarbonizing the transport sector while leaving no one behind was a recurrent theme. An interagency report, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Development, produced by DESA in consultation with UN and other agencies, served as the main substantive input to the conference.

At the closing ceremony, the Beijing Statement was presented by the Minister of Transport of China, in his capacity as Conference Chair, to serve as a framework for implementation of transport-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to practice, it will be submitted by China to the UN Secretary-General and will be issued as a General Assembly document.

In the lead-up to the conference, a new online repository was created to capture information about ongoing and new commitments and efforts by Member States and all other actors in support of sustainable transport. This repository will remain open and registrations will continue to be encouraged in connection with other upcoming events as well as in support of the Decade of Action for the SDGs.

“We have the opportunity now to capture the innovation and technology that can revolutionize transport, but these new technologies have to work for everyone. We have the solutions, and now we need the global cooperation to

ensure that sustainable transport will be the engine that powers our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Agreement.”
– Conference Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Strengthening links between the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement

To demonstrate the connections between climate action and SDG acceleration, DESA hosted the SDG Pavilion in the expo space at COP26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom in November. Experts from across the UN system and from stakeholder groups came to DESA’s SDG Pavilion to participate in discussions on ocean management, sustainable water and energy, forests, and climate and SDG financing, in a hybrid in-person and virtual format. One highlight event during the first week featured the Executive Secretaries of the five UN Regional Commissions, who discussed best practices for bridging the gap on climate financing. Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin participated in several high-level events virtually, including events related to the UN Ocean Conference and the Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions Partnerships Network.

COP26 marked the third time that DESA organized the SDG Pavilion, providing a highly visible platform for showcasing the Department’s thought leadership on energy, the ocean, transport, water, small island developing States (SIDS), and more, making clear links between the 2030 Agenda and the goals of the Paris Agreement. Key events featured the SDG 7 Global Roadmap, the independent group of scientists working on the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report, and the energy-climate-transport nexus related to SIDS. Overall, more than 40 events were held, featuring about 200 speakers joining virtual or in person, close to 1,000 on-site participants and over 1,500 attendees joining through digital platforms.

Further strengthening the SDG and Paris Agreement connection, DESA and UNFCCC co-convened the Third Global Conference on Synergizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in July in Tokyo, Japan. The conference was hosted by Japan's Ministry of the Environment in partnership with the United Nations University (UNU) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). DESA Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin and Ibrahim Thiaw, Acting Executive Secretary of UNFCCC, delivered opening remarks, joined by high-level messages from the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the Minister of the Environment of Japan and other high-level officials. The Conference was attended by several hundreds of participants, either in-person or online, including over 100 speakers from around the world. The event brought together stakeholders committed to breaking down silos between these two tracks of work to eliminate duplicative work and streamline implementation of their shared goals.

Underscoring this important work to connect the two agendas, DESA released its Climate Review in December to illustrate how the Department's work on each SDG is connected to SDG 13 Climate Action and helps realize the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Recognizing the need for Harmony with Nature

On 22 April, the eleventh Interactive Dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature to Commemorate the International Mother Earth Day was held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. DESA, in collaboration with the Office of the PGA and the Permanent Mission of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, supported the event, under the theme of "Harmony with Nature and Biodiversity: Contributions of Ecological Economics and Earth-centred Law". The President of the General Assembly opened the dialogue along with the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and the Vice-President and Minister of Ecological Transition of Spain. The opening session was followed by keynote speakers from the European Union, Belgium, New Zealand, India, and Chile.

The dialogue was composed of two panels on "Earth-centred Law to Protect Biodiversity in Harmony with Nature" and "Ecological Economics to Protect Biodiversity in Harmony with Nature".

Prioritizing clean water for all

The Second High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 was convened by the Government of Tajikistan in Dushanbe, in June 2022, under the theme, "Catalyzing water action and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels". Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin, together with the Prime Minister of Tajikistan, co-chaired the conference and moderated two plenary sessions and the closing session. The conference was attended by more than 2,700 participants from 160 countries and 80 official delegations. As a main outcome the conference adopted the [Dushanbe Declaration](#), "From Dushanbe 2022 to New York 2023."

