

Restoration as a pathway to synergies: land, water and the Rio Conventions

Date: 9 September 2026

Time: 13:15 to 14:45 (time in Nairobi, EAT)

Location: Conference Room 3 in the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)
and on [MS Teams in this link](#).

Concept note

Healthy ecosystems, spanning land, freshwater, and coastal environments, underpin climate regulation, biodiversity, food security, and human well-being. Yet ecosystem degradation continues at an alarming rate, undermining progress across the environmental agenda and threatening the achievement of the SDGs. Preventing further degradation must remain the first and most cost-effective line of action. Strengthening the protection and sustainable management of ecosystems is therefore not only an environmental imperative but a prerequisite for achieving our collective commitments under the Rio Conventions and beyond. Where degradation has already occurred, however, restoration offers a powerful and practical pathway to recovery and an opportunity to strengthen coherence across environmental governance processes.

This event will be structured around introductory remarks, a country dialogue segment, a panel discussion, and an interactive closing, exploring how ecosystem restoration, encompassing both land and water dimensions, can serve as a practical entry point for strengthening coherence across environmental governance processes, including the Rio Conventions and the SDGs.

With the COPs of the three Rio Conventions taking place in close succession in 2026, there is a unique opportunity to use restoration to align agendas, identify common priorities, and accelerate integrated implementation. The event also coincides with the midpoint of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), led by UNEP and FAO, and builds on the increased emphasis placed on land and water degradation and restoration in UNEP's MTS.

Introductory Remarks will set the scene, framing restoration as a unifying entry point across land, water, and the broader environmental governance agenda in 2026, including a short video showcase of flagship restoration initiatives that will be launched at UNCDD COP17 in Mongolia on 26 August.

A *Country Dialogue* segment will then give the floor to Member States and COP Presidencies from across the three Rio Conventions (exact details TBC, suggested: Colombia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, Ugandatbc etc.), to share their experiences and perspectives on how restoration is contributing to meeting climate, biodiversity, and land degradation targets and linking these agendas.

The *Panel Discussion* will build on restoration practitioners' voices, bringing together World Restoration Flagships representatives and partners to explore how specific initiatives are progressing in a holistic manner, and to discuss priorities and opportunities for advancing integrated land and water restoration through the remaining Rio Conventions COPs in 2026 and beyond.

An *Interactive Closing Segment* will invite broader audience participation, drawing out key takeaways and opportunities for collaboration.

Proposed speakers will be a combination of Member States, UN representatives, and/or partners present in Nairobi. The event is envisaged to be organized in collaboration with the Friends of Soil Health, SIDS, and other relevant stakeholder groups.

Panel

Moderator:

- Georgina Athamandia Avlonitis, SIDS Coordinator, UNEP - confirmed

Panelists:

- Susan Gardner, Director, Ecosystem Division, UNEP - confirmed
- Country segment: representatives from Colombia/Egypt/Kazakhstan/Rwanda/Saudi Arabia/South Africa/ Türkiye/Uganda tbc. - tentative
- Panel discussion: representatives from World Restoration Flagships/UN Decade partners - tentative

Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker
13:15 – 13:25	Opening remarks - Scene-setting by moderator framing restoration as a synergetic agenda and opening remarks by Susan Gardener, UNEP, highlighting recent developments and UNEP's work	Moderator Susan Gardner
13:25 – 13:30	Flagship videos - Screening of 3 x 1 – min flagship videos	
13:30 – 13:55	Country voices - Floor given to Member States to briefly share perspectives from Rio Conventions and their country experience and aspiration	TBC suggested: Colombia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Rwanda, Türkiye, Uganda
13:55 – 14:35	Panel discussion - World Restoration Flagships representatives and UN Decade partners discuss how restoration initiatives contribute to cross-convention goals (moderated exchange with speakers)	TBC
14:35 – 14:40	Interactive closing - Audience engagement to capture key takeaways and amplify the conversation	Moderator Audience
14:40 – 14:45	Wrap up - Moderator's summary and closing remarks	Moderator