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

Date: September 9th
Time: 13:15 to 14:45 (time in Nairobi, EAT)
Location: Conference Room 3 in the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) or 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 were launched at UNCDD COP17 in Mongolia on August 26th.

A *Country Dialogue* segment will then give the floor to Member States and COP Presidencies from across the three Rio Conventions to share their experiences and perspectives on how restoration is contributing to meeting climate, biodiversity, and land degradation targets and linking these agendas. Then, the floor will be opened to other countries to share their experience.

Following the Country Dialogue, an *Interactive Segment* will invite the broader audience to engage with the discussion before moving into the Panel, ensuring that audience perspectives inform and enrich the conversation.

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.

Closing remarks will highlight conclusions and way forward.

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

Panel

Moderator: Georgina Athamandia Avlonitis, SIDS Coordinator, UNEP – *confirmed*

- **Opening remarks by UNEP**
- **Country segment on Rio synergies**
    - Ambassador H.E. Sahak Sargyan, Permanent Representative to UNEP, Armenia, as UNCBD COP17 Presidency
    - Moritz Weber, German Federal Ministry for Environment
    - Mr. Ngugi Kimani, Geospatial Data and Technologies Manager, Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD)
    - Floor is opened to other countries
- **Interactive Segment:** Live audience engagement to capture emerging themes and shared priorities from the Country Dialogue, feeding directly into the Panel Discussion
- **Panel discussion: representatives from World Restoration Flagships/UN Decade partners**

Moderator: Natalia Alekseseeeva, Coordinator of the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, UNEP

- Vera Voronova, Altyn Dala representative, Kazakhstan
- Constantino Aucca Chutas – Accion Andina representative, Indigenous People representative
- Leigh Ann Winowiecki, Global Research Leader: Soil and Land Health, Landscape Alliance (CIFOR-ICRAF)

- **Closing remarks by UNEP**

Agenda

Time	Session
13:15 – 13:25	Opening remarks - Scene-setting by moderator framing restoration as a synergetic agenda and opening from UNEP
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 on synergies across Rio Conventions and country experience and aspiration - Discussion opened to other participants to provide examples from the floor
13:55 – 14:00	Interactive Segment - Live audience engagement to capture emerging themes and shared priorities from the Country Dialogue, feeding directly into the Panel Discussion
14:00 – 14:40	Panel discussion - World Restoration Flagships representatives and UN Decade partners discuss how restoration initiatives contribute to cross-convention goals (moderated exchange with speakers)
14:40 – 14:45	Wrap up - Closing remarks by UNEP, highlighting recent developments and work - Moderator's summary and closing