

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Nairobi, 26 March 2024  
14:00 – 16:30 (GMT+3)  
Hybrid meeting  
Conference Room 2 (in person)  
and Microsoft Teams (online)

**Agenda item 2: Briefing on the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.**

This background document has been developed by the Secretariat to update the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the progress made under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration implementation and developments since the latest briefing, including with regard to the process for the open call and relevant nominations for new Decade's Flagships in 2024, as well as other planned activities.

Following the presentation, Member States and Stakeholders are invited to take note of the information, and to consider supporting the submission of applications for the open call and implementation of the UN Decade till 2030.

## **Briefing on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and 2024 Call for Flagships to the Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

**26 March 2024**

Led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) continues to build a strong, broad-based global movement to ramp up restoration and put the world on track for a sustainable future.

[Science](#) shows that without massive revival of degraded and lost ecosystems, the Paris Agreement, as well as global biodiversity and Sustainable Development Goals, are no longer attainable. Decarbonization of economies and restoration of ecosystems need to go hand in hand. Scientists also agree that action needs to happen within this decade in order to avoid catastrophic climate change and mass biodiversity loss.

As part of international agreements, countries have already promised to restore over 1 billion hectares – an area larger than China. But little is known about progress and quality of implementation. This is where the UN Decade comes in.

Coordinated by the Secretariat within the Ecosystems Division of UNEP, the UN Decade strives to mobilize efforts for large-scale ecosystem restoration, supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in 2022, and other instruments and commitments under Multilateral Environment Agreements. In a year coinciding with the organization of all 3 Rio Conventions COPs, CBD COP16 on Biodiversity, UNFCCC COP29 on Climate and UNCCD on COP16, the UN Decade can be a connecting thread fostering action and solutions across all three agendas.

This document provides an overview of recent developments, and upcoming activities, including the 2024 Call for Flagships and the UN Secretary-General report, emphasizing its relevance to the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

### **The Road to 2030**

Countries have collectively committed to restore at least one billion degraded hectares of land by 2030 – the world must now deliver. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is a global initiative aimed at preventing, halting, and reversing the degradation of ecosystems worldwide. It aims to do so by fostering a global restoration action in which restoration initiatives scale up across the planet, with 3 key pathways, outlined in its Strategy: i) build a global movement; ii) generate political support; iii) develop capacity. While the UN Decade concludes in 2030, its legacy will be a platform enabling global societies to redefine their connections with nature, setting a new course for centuries to come.

### **Recent developments**

Since the last briefing to the CPR on 13 December 2022, the UN Decade partner network has grown to encompass over 250+ organizations, 7 new World Restoration Flagships have been

announced, adding to the 10 flagships already awarded in 2022. Together, these 17 [UN World Restoration Flagships](#) are reviving over 100 million hectares of land and aquatic ecosystems and creating over 5 million jobs. They are now being actively supported through technical advice, financing and communication and advocacy under the UN Decade.

The work of the UN Decades Task Forces of Best Practices, Finance, Monitoring, Science and Youth has continued, bringing together over 500 experts. A specific focus has been put on creating a baseline for the Global Biodiversity Framework Target 2 across ecosystems, where a significant scientific and policy gap still exists. UNEP and FAO led initial discussions with CBD and other stakeholders, and the UN Decade co-hosted a Target 2 Monitoring Workshop together with countries and other stakeholders. The continuation of this work will be critical for achieving and monitoring GBF and other restoration targets across all ecosystems – not only terrestrial ones.

UNEP is taking a leading role in coordinating this massive partnership, ensuring organizations do not only pledge support, but deliver on the ground. For this, the [Action Plan](#) of the UN Decade has identified 12 key areas along with measurable goals, where progress has to be made in order to achieve restoration success by 2030. These include restoration for carbon removal and biodiversity benefits, but also sectoral action, for example in education and finance.

For example, one area identified as lacking in current restoration commitments and implementation where freshwater ecosystems, for which – in contrast to forests, for example – no global alliances or pledges existed. Under the UN Decade Action Plan and together with partners like WWF and IUCN, UNEP initiated the [Freshwater Challenge](#). Under the Freshwater Challenge, countries have come together to restore 300,000km of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands by 2030. This equates to a distance seven times around the Earth and an area larger than India.

Similarly, the Education Challenge – co-led with UNESCO, a network of Nature-Positive Universities, the Scouts and other partners – aims at mainstreaming ecosystem restoration in formal and informal education. Under the Cities Challenge, [Generation Restoration Cities](#) were identified – from Yangzhou, China to Seattle, USA, from Quezon in the Philippines to Douala in Cameroun – that are now collaborating to revive urban ecosystems.

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration also advanced on the implementation phase via the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF). UNEP and FAO would like to thank Germany and Denmark for their continued contributions and support to the UNEP Ecosystem Division/UN Decade team. The MPTF is open for replenishment and co-leads would like to call for relevant contributions to scale up restoration activities and support the Decade's implementation.

Such investments not only contribute to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, but also promise significant economic returns and fostering social, economic, and ecological resilience. Drawing on data spanning various ecosystems, it is anticipated that every dollar invested in restoration could yield economic benefits ranging from three to seventy-five dollars through ecosystem goods and services.

**What are World Restoration Flagships? Why apply?**

The World Restoration Flagships of the UN Decade are the most ambitious, promising, or successful examples of large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration in any country or region, embodying the 10 Restoration Principles of the UN Decade. Flagships will enable the UN Decade to make Ecosystem Restoration tangible for a broad audience and inspire a global movement. These geographically focused restoration areas are featured prominently in the UN Decade's publications, campaigns, outreach, advocacy, and education efforts. The World Restoration Flagships represent important, inspiring restoration areas, and have wider learning and restoration potential and scalability. They facilitate coordination, learning, scaling, and bringing more attention to the area and the obstacles it faces.

If selected as a World Restoration Flagship, the project will obtain:

- UN recognition as one of the planet's foremost examples of reviving Earth.
- Technical & monitoring support.
- Communication support to make restoration efforts famous – reaching billions of people.
- Financial support of up to USD 500,000 per Flagship in eligible countries.

### **2024 Call for Flagships: Nomination and assessment processes to identify the Flagships**

This is an invitation to stakeholders in Member States and regional organizations to propose and endorse Flagship Initiatives. To ensure political support and alignment with state programs for broader national support, only representatives of UN Member States, or Regional Organizations bringing together several Member States, or UN Decade Partners that provide a letter of endorsement by a government partner will be eligible to nominate World Restoration Flagships. The deadline for the application is 31 May 2024 and at least 10 new Flagships will be selected and announced in 2025.

Assessment of all received Flagship nominations will be carried out by the UN Decade Task Force on Best Practices, in close collaboration with other Task Forces and the Advisory Board. The final approval will be confirmed by UNEP and FAO, whereas the selected sub-group of flagships will receive financial support of up to USD 500,000 from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund. (Note that both developing and developed countries are encouraged to apply, but only Flagships based in developing countries will be eligible for financial aid.)

Assessment criteria of nominated World Restoration Flagships:

1. Clearly identifiable geographically.
2. Initial success of restoration: Compliance with the ten principles for ecosystem restoration to demonstrate that part of the nominated area is already under effective, measurable, and well-documented restoration.
3. Potential upscaling.
4. Potential for learning and replicability.
5. Additional probability of success.

### **UN Decade Action Plan**

Outlined in UN Decade's strategy, the 2021-2030 Action Plan sets out the next steps to collectively work towards the goals and vision of the UN Decade. Moving from strategy to action, this plan aims to mobilise partners around key priority areas for restoration – the

Restoration Challenges – and sets ambitious challenge targets for a global #GenerationRestoration movement, with the Faith, Indigenous People and Finance Challenges launched at the Global Landscape Forum in 2022 and the Water Challenge launched in 2023. It allows for the UN Decade partners to take thematic leadership following the UN Decade resolution mandate for wide network leadership and at everyone who wants to be part of restoring Earth by 2030 in its “New Power” set-up. The Action Plan will be updated in 2024-2025 to reflect the developments and new commitments.

### **The UN Secretary-General's report to the UN General Assembly in 2026**

The forthcoming report from the UN Secretary-General to the 81<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in 2026 holds significant importance in guiding the implementation and planning of the UN Decade until 2030. The report will serve as a powerful call for action, urging Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the ambitious goals set forth by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The report will first celebrate best practices from partners, by featuring the World Restoration Flagships as tangible, on-the-ground examples of restoration activities, illustrating their important role in amplifying worldwide efforts and galvanizing the force of #GenerationRestoration. Secondly, it will also take stock of global restoration efforts and outline gaps and barriers where more action is needed to deliver on our ambitions. Finally, it will set the course for the next half of the Decade by identifying key strategic actions needed.

### **UNEP, FAO and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration would like to encourage the CPR delegates and representatives to:**

- **Share information on the UN Decade activities and the 2024 call for World Restoration Flagships with national partners and potential applicants.**
- **Support the nomination process and the restoration movement to enhance global restoration efforts.**
- **Contribute to the replenishment of the UN Decade MPTF to advance restoration science, implementation, monitoring and movement building worldwide.**