

# World Environment Day 2024

## REPORT



**Our Land. Our Future**  
We are  
**#GenerationRestoration**



**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY**



**Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**  
2024

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Photo: Dreamstime

# What is World Environment Day?

World Environment Day (WED) is one of the largest and most influential platforms to mobilize commitments and rally action to protect the planet. Facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), it has been celebrated annually since 1973.



# World Environment Day 2024

Hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the record-breaking WED 2024 focused on restoring land, halting desertification and building drought resilience under the theme “Our Land. Our Future. We are #GenerationRestoration.”

Humanity depends on land. Farmlands, forests, grasslands, savannahs, peatlands and mountains provide the goods and services that make civilization possible. These landscapes are underpinned by aquatic ecosystems such as oceans, rivers and lakes, which sustain the water cycles that keep land fertile.

Yet, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption are driving the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, as well as pollution and waste, and sapping the strength of land to support ecosystems, agriculture and communities.

Up to 40 per cent of the world’s land is degraded, an estimated 3.2 billion

people worldwide are negatively impacted by desertification, and more than three-quarters of the world’s population will be affected by droughts by 2050. This will disproportionately impact those who are least equipped to cope, including Indigenous Peoples, rural communities, smallholder farmers and the extremely poor, especially women and youth. If land degradation remains unchecked, it could reduce global food productivity by 12 per cent, causing food prices to soar by up to 30 per cent by 2040.

The theme of this year’s WED was particularly significant because healthy land is a critical enabler of the success all three Rio Conventions: on biological diversity, climate change and desertification. The year 2024 marks the first time all three conventions are holding their annual Conference of the Party meetings back to back in the last quarter of the same year.



# A record-breaking World Environment Day 2024 in numbers

## #World Environment Day

was the top trending hashtag on X (formerly Twitter) on 5 June

**421 million**

times UNEP-produced WED content was seen across social media with support from UN Goodwill Ambassadors, influencers and celebrities

**3,939**

registered events and activities held in more than **150** countries around the world (highest number ever)

**37 million+**

views of UNEP's WED videos on YouTube

**12 million**

views of the "Of Course" social media challenge

**2.6 million**

estimated reach of WED stories syndicated in global and regional media and press wire services

**1 million+**

visits to the WED website www.worldenvironment-day.global, with 547,000 users visiting the site to learn and engage

**125,000**

views of stories on unep.org and live feed, one of the top three WED pages

**52,361**

articles published in **10,604** media outlets across **178** countries in **57** languages of which **2,986** mentioned UNEP

**45,000**

downloads of the We are #GenerationRestoration practical guide, designed to get the public involved in restoring land, halting desertification and building drought resilience and available in six languages

# We are #GenerationRestoration global campaign

The WED celebration helped raise the profile of land degradation, desertification and drought while showcasing the potential of ecosystem restoration. It united world leaders, artists, celebrities, astronauts, schoolchildren and a chorus of others in a call to protect and restore the Earth.

The global campaign was organized around the principle of ecosystem restoration, a process of reviving natural spaces. This task has never been more urgent and many countries around the world are recognizing and acting on this urgency. Nations are showcasing restoration work under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a global push to revive damaged ecosystems such as forests, grasslands and wetlands.

The World Restoration Flagships—a series of pioneering initiatives—demonstrate how restoration delivers a wide range of environmental benefits, including increased productivity, carbon sequestration and biodiversity preservation.



The beauty of ecosystem restoration is that everyone alive right now has a critical role to play for the future of land. We are not just Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z or Gen Alpha. We are [#GenerationRestoration](#).

The WED 2024 campaign engaged global networks to mobilize communities, targeted stakeholders including the public and private sector, young people, and activated the entire UN family. The message resounded loud and clear. Everyone alive right now has a critical role to play in securing the healthy future of land. We cannot turn back time, but we can grow and revive forests, harvest rainwater, fight climate change, and tackle pollution. We are the generation that can make peace with land.

The end result was a vibrant campaign that broke records. UNEP's WED 2024 content was seen across social media by 421 million people. Around the globe, citizens in over 150 countries united and organized a record-breaking 3,939 restoration events and activities. From Asia and the Pacific to North America, hundreds of millions of people got involved, organized restoration projects and activities, and shared messages. Many celebrities joined the [push to revive the Earth](#) by urging people to do their part to repair the planet.



Photo: National Centre for Vegetation Cover, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

WED also represented a global cultural moment, with artists, musicians and actors voicing support for environmental action, including UN Goodwill Ambassadors Roberta Annan, Massimo Bottura, Gisele Bündchen, Don Cheadle, Rocky Dawuni, Leonardo DiCaprio, Michael Douglas, Chef Leyla Fathallah, Aidan Gallagher, Ellie Goulding, Chris Lee, Li Bingbing, Dia Mirza, Jason Momoa, Lewis Pugh, Alex Rendel, Antoinette Taus and Karry Wang.

Other notable personalities and organizations that spread the message included UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Mayor of Mexico City and Mexico President Elect Dr. Claudia Sheinbaum and Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).

NASA, the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration, got involved in the campaign by releasing a video with Astronaut Jessica Meir, who shared her memories of seeing Earth from space and underscored the beauty and fragility of the natural world.





# Notable quotes



“In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, great efforts have been made to restore lands and limit degradation, including with the Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Initiative, but also to promote regional cooperation to reduce land degradation, conserve vegetation, enhance biodiversity and food security.”

—*Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen*  
*AlFadley, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*  
*Minister of Environment, Water and*  
*Agriculture*

Photo: Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



“Humanity depends on land. Yet, all over the world, a toxic cocktail of pollution, climate chaos, and biodiversity decimation are turning healthy lands into deserts, and thriving ecosystems into dead zones.. It’s time to break free. Countries must deliver on all their commitments to restore degraded ecosystems and land, and on the entire Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.”

—*António Guterres,*  
*UN Secretary-General*

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



“Billions across the world are facing food insecurity, crippling droughts, and livelihoods are under threat... Restoration is the natural solution to help address the triple planetary crisis, deliver new jobs, lower poverty and build resilience to extreme weather. Land is life—and we must protect it.”

—*Inger Andersen,*  
*UNEP Executive Director*



“Currently, 3.2 billion people are impacted by land degradation, and 86 million people are exposed to severe or extreme drought... Multilateralism is our only way to solve these interconnected and integrated challenges. Successfully dealing with the triple planetary crisis will require building an international consensus, among a wide and diverse group of stakeholders, on how to deliver a better present and safeguard the future.”

—*Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, UNEP*  
*Deputy Executive Director*



“This morning, I planted a tree in line with our commitment to protecting Mother Nature and making sustainable lifestyle choices. I urge you all to also contribute to making our planet better...in the last decade, India has undertaken numerous collective efforts which have led to increased forest cover across the nation. This is great for our quest towards sustainable development. It is also commendable how local communities have risen to the occasion and taken a lead in this.”

—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

Photo: Unsplash

Photo: UNEP



“Climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss are impacting us all at an alarming rate. It is our collective responsibility to protect, restore, and preserve the environment for our children and grandchildren. From combatting unprecedented wildfires to ensuring clean air and fresh water, we remain steadfast in doing whatever it takes to protect our planet.”

—Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Photo: UN Photo/ Eskinder Debebe

# Host country activities

The WED 2024 campaign officially kicked off on 28 April in Riyadh at the start of the Saudi Environment Week. UNEP Deputy Executive Director Elizabeth Maruma Mrema was on hand for the ceremony. “Now is the time to act on commitments to prevent, halt and reverse ecosystem degradation,” said Mrema in her address.

On 5 June, UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen addressed dignitaries gathered at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Centre in Riyadh, including Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen AlFadley, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture. In addition to a panel discussion, the celebratory event featured theatrical performances. In several cities in Saudi Arabia, buildings sparkled with green lights and drone shows illuminated the skies.

A three-day exhibition was held at the Riyadh International Conventions and Exhibitions Center with the participation of non-governmental organizations and national institutions in addition to the UN Country Team, UNEP and the League of Arab States showcasing their work on ecosystem restoration.

Exhibition and workshops on land degradation and restoration were also held in various regions of the Kingdom including in Abha, Al-Baha, Arar, Buraidah, Hail, Jazan, Jeddah, Jubail, Khobar, Mecca, Medina, Najran, Rabigh, Sakaka, Tabuk, Taif and Yanbu.

At a side event, UNEP Executive Director Andersen met with Saudi youth from several universities to discuss their vision for a healthy planet and sound environment.



*UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen AlFadley*



*UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen meets with youth from several universities in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*



*School children perform at a World Environment Day event in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

# Global events and activities

UN Secretary-General António Guterres delivered a [special address from the American Museum of Natural History](#) calling for a quicker transition away from fossil fuels. “It’s ‘We the Peoples’ versus the polluters and the profiteers,” he said. “Together, we can win. But it’s time for leaders to decide whose side they’re on.”

Climate justice activist Xiye Bastida, filmmaker Finian Makepeace and UNEP Ecosystems Division Deputy Director Bruno Pozzi, took part in a screening of the documentary [Kiss the Ground](#) followed by a youth-led panel discussion.

In the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Supreme Council for Environment run [WED campaign](#) content on multiple social media platforms and organized several land restoration activities with the private sector and a symposium on Bahrain’s efforts to halt desertification.

In Oman, WED videos and messaging focused on food and land degradation were showcased at the annual exhibition of products, services, equipment and technologies known as [HORECA exhibition](#) held in Muscat.

In Lebanon, WED messages were broadcast on radios throughout the day in Arabic and French.

In Yemen, staff of the UN Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement and neighbouring communities cleaned a plot of land in Sana’a and planted various trees and plants including *Delonix regia* and fig trees.

In China, [Champion of the Earth winner Ant Forest](#) launched a WED-themed campaign to encourage the public to plant cold and drought-tolerant tree species in China’s Three-North regions. By 19 June, over two million people participated through the Ant Forest platform and contributed to the restoration of 1,400 hectares of degraded land.

In the United States, the city of Seattle, a UNEP [Generation Restoration “Role Model City”](#), unveiled [two iconic murals](#), including one painted by world-renowned artist Victor Ash, which is the largest urban exterior wall art in North America at 245 metres long. The other mural was produced by the famous Mexican 3-D artist Adry del Rocio and celebrates Seattle’s deep connection to the sea. The vibrant artwork captures the beauty and diversity of marine life, emphasizing the importance of protecting ocean ecosystems.

The mural serves as a visual reminder of the critical role oceans play in our environment and encourages viewers to work to preserve marine habitats,



promote conservation efforts and support policies that protect oceanic health.

The original pieces of art were curated by the non-profit [Street Art for Mankind](#) with the support of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The U.S. state of California celebrated WED with the opening of [Dos Rios](#), its newest state park in nearly a decade. Located at the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin rivers, the park adds nearly 650 hectares to the state park system with the aim to restore habitats for threatened wildlife.

California also removed four hydroelectric dams on the [Klamath River](#), the largest dam removal project in the United States. For over a century, the dams blocked fish passage, contributed to harmful algal blooms and impaired water quality. The project greatly benefited from traditional ecological knowledge and the tireless efforts of Indigenous and community activists.

[The Society for Ecological Restoration](#) a UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration partner, ran its annual “[Make a Difference Week](#)” in support

of WED 2024. Individuals and organizations from around the world hosted and participated in community-based restoration projects and events. The week attracted more than 6,000 volunteers who hosted over 397 restorative events.



WED also saw the unveiling of the world’s first sports mascot made entirely from upcycled materials by Inter Miami CF, the Major League Soccer team co-owned by David Beckham and home to star player Lionel Messi. Named “Heron” after the club’s nickname, the mascot was created from upcycled

sports gear collected from the team. Publicized on social media and covered across news outlets, the unveiling brought WED to football enthusiasts.

In Canada, the federal government announced a Can\$530 million investment through the Green Municipal Fund to help cities adapt to climate change by building resilient infrastructure. This funding will support

climate adaptation planning and implementation projects across the country, ensuring that communities are better prepared for climate-related events.

Additionally, the Government of Canada extended a pilot program to support innovative funding opportunities for biodiversity conservation, fostering new approaches to protect and restore ecosystems. Subsequently, following WED’s momentum, Canada announced its 2030 Nature Strategy and introduced the Nature Accountability Bill.

Across the Atlantic in Europe, German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier held a WED forum with youth at the Bellevue Palace in Berlin on 5 June as part of environment week. The forum focused on nature restoration and Germany’s work under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and how biodiversity loss will impact young people and how ecosystem restoration can help forge a better future.

Two European landmarks sent out a powerful visual message by lighting up in green on the evening of 5 June. Thanks to a partnership with the city’s electricity firm, Geneva’s Jet d’eau soared 140 metres high in green to remind residents and visitors of how protecting, managing and restoring



freshwater ecosystems is key to combating the triple planetary crisis. The city of Brussels showed its support by lighting up its iconic City Hall in green. The city recently also hosted European Union (EU) leaders as they backed a historic law to restore nature across the bloc.

Also in Brussels, 800 people attended the European premiere of *Our Blue World*. Policymakers, diplomats, representatives from EU institutions and non-governmental organizations, students and journalists engaged in a



panel discussion with the film's director, the Chief Scientist of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, a farmer from the United Kingdom and a high-level representative from the Brussels Capital region.

At the Vienna International Centre, schoolchildren explained how they would like their city to look in the future. They conducted a mock conference focused on urban planning and tabled proposals on how to breathe new life into the city, ranging from calls to green roofs with edible fruits to expanding Vienna's parks. UNEP will present these recommendations to the City of Vienna. Zoological parks around the world also celebrated WED, including the



Berlin, Dublin and Singapore and India zoos by in India, by organizing a Restoration Rally and educational programmes for visitors.

The Republic of Kazakhstan celebrated the return of Przewalski horses after a 200-year absence. The animals, considered the world's last genetically wild horses, were taken from two European zoos to be released into the wild as part of an effort to restore Kazakhstan's grasslands.

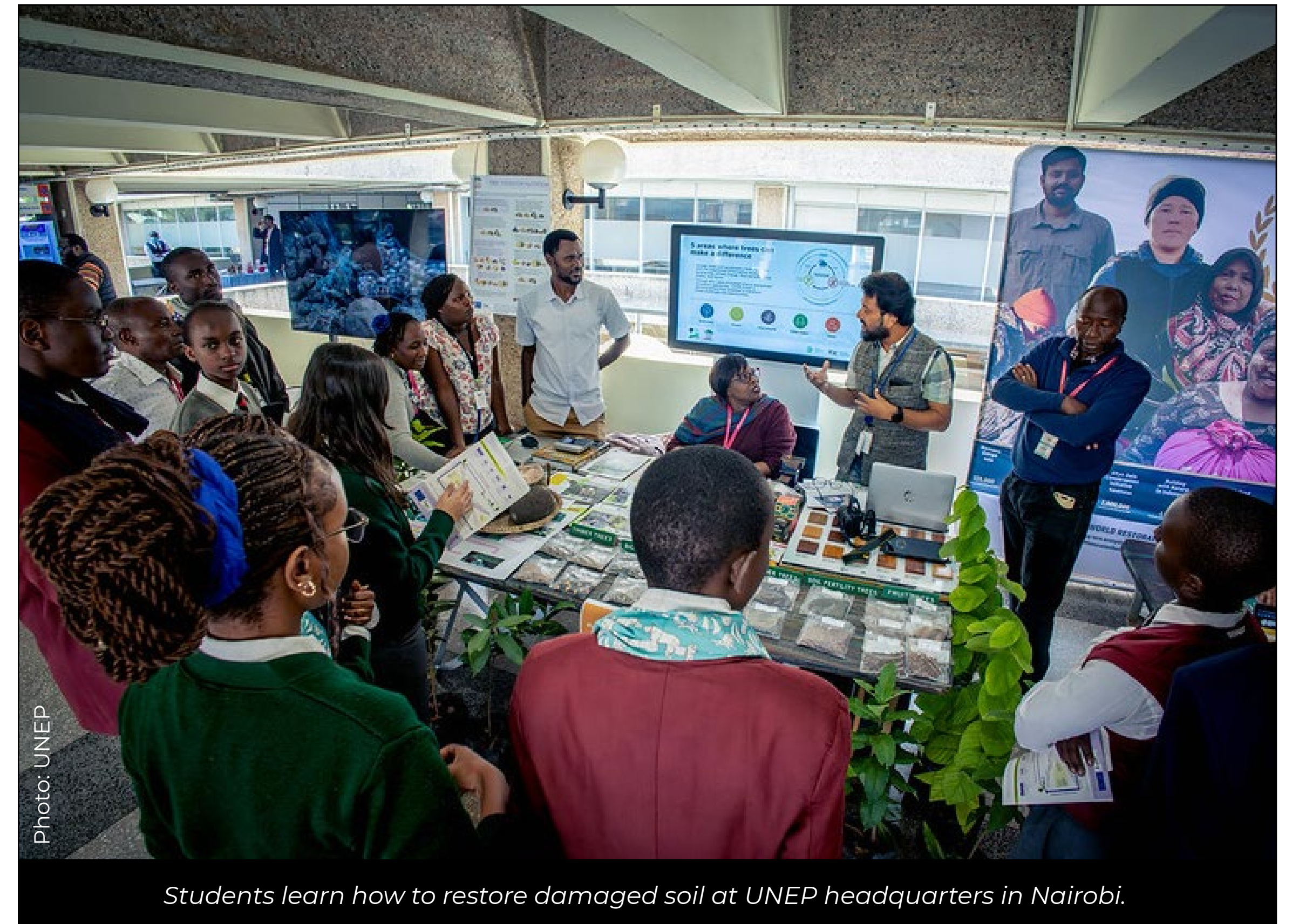
In Kenya, the band Future Sounds and Kimmy Wangari debuted a new track, "That's What Earth Said", written for this year's WED celebrations at the UN Office in Nairobi (UNON). Performers included Maasai singers.



Conservationists release Przewalski's horses at the Alтын Dala Conservation Initiative ecosystems in Kazakhstan.

Also at UNON, a healthy soil workshop organized in partnership with CIFOR-ICRAF with local school students aimed at exploring the main drivers of land degradation, the basics of soil management and nature-based solutions to soil management.

One of East Africa's telecom giants celebrated WED with a digital campaign across multiple platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook and X, that garnered 96,000 organic impressions. Safaricom staff also planted over 15,000 trees in the counties of Elgeyo-Marakwet, Kericho, Kiambu and Nakuru.



Students learn how to restore damaged soil at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi.

# Global commitments

- ◆ A new observatory to track the progress of Africa's Great Green Wall was unveiled.
- ◆ Bangladesh announced plans to expand tree cover to 25 per cent of land area by 2030.
- ◆ Brazil President Lula da Silva attended a presentation by Brazil Minister of the Environment Marina Silva summarizing the actions of the ministry in nearly a year and a half of government. The minister announced new environmental protection measures, including related decrees signed.
- ◆ Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reaffirmed the government's commitment to conserve 30 per cent of land and ocean by 2030, and to boost clean energy industries.
- ◆ Liberia President Joseph Boakai proclaimed WED to be observed throughout the country as a working holiday.
- ◆ Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu launched the 5 million Tree Project.
- ◆ Oman planted over 16 million seeds under an initiative to plant 10 million indigenous trees.
- ◆ Saudi Arabia launches the National Environmental Academy and announced the Land Degradation Neutrality plan to be reached by 2030.
- ◆ Sweden Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson announced the government's intention to ban bottom trawling in marine protected areas and all Swedish territorial waters (up to 12 nautical miles).
- ◆ The Prince Talal International Prize for Human Development announced the winners of US\$1,000,000 dedicated for Life on Land.
- ◆ The Rainforest Trust announced a massive milestone—50 million acres of habitat protected to date, or an area 40 times the size of the Grand Canyon.



# Partnership engagement

In 2024, WED provided a platform for organizations around the world to amplify efforts to restore land, halt desertification and build drought resilience.

UN agencies, including the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN](#), the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#), the UN [Children's Fund](#), the [International Organization for Migration](#) and the [Airport Council International](#) (ACI) highlighted how they are helping to restore land and counter drought and desertification.

UNEP's [Faith for Earth Coalition](#) joined the global celebration of WED with a series of videos from faith leaders from around the world discussing how faith teachings can contribute to better environmental stewardship.

This year, UNEP also partnered with Weibo, one of the largest social media platforms in China. Weibo launched a digital campaign receiving 610 million impressions and 6 million engagements.

The International Association of Public Transport disseminated UNEP's

messages and videos globally in airports and on trains and public buses, reaching hundreds of thousands of people and engaging with transportation networks in 112 countries.

From Times Square to Trafalgar square, to bus shelters and airports in Beijing, Beirut, and Osaka: to billboards in Botswana, Eswatini, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe WED was on everyone's mind.



*World Environment Day advertising on display in New York City.*

[JCDecaux](#), one of the world's largest advertising companies, promoted WED on 75 panels on bus shelters in New York City from 20 May to 16 June, with 49,000 estimated impressions.

[LinkNYC](#), a state-of-the-art communications network



featuring more than 2,000 kiosks with 1.2 billion impressions weekly that reach 95 per cent of New Yorkers every month, featured WED posters and videos on all its kiosks from 1 May to 5 June.

NYC Ferry ran the UNEP public service announcement video on digital

screens across its network during the weeks prior to WED, from 22 May to 5 June. With a ridership of 6.6 million people annually, NYC Ferry is a core part of New York City's commuter infrastructure, connecting New Yorkers across all five boroughs.

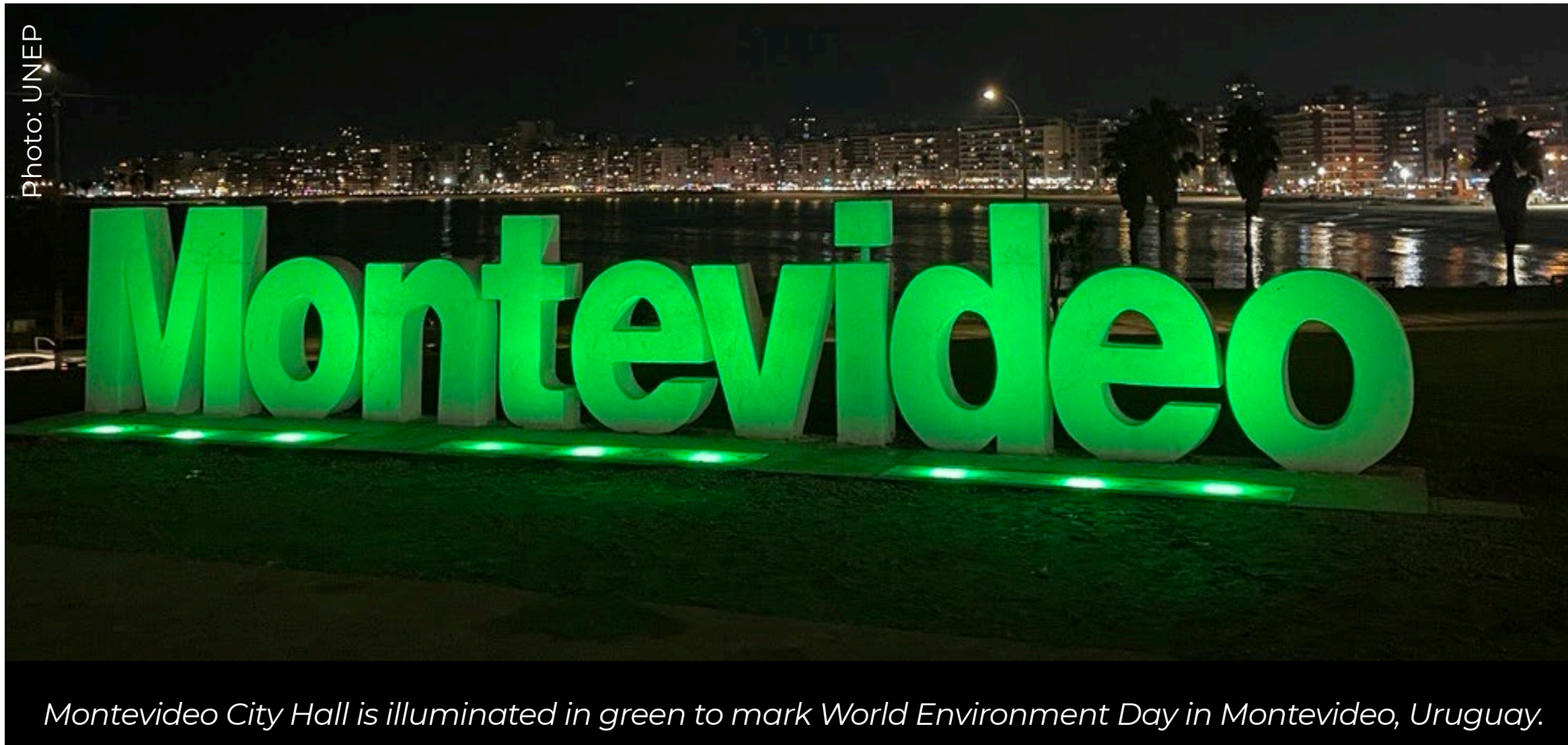
OUTFRONT Media, one of the largest outdoor advertising companies in the United States, partnered with UNEP again this year to provide extensive billboard coverage of the WED campaign, free of charge. WED campaign messaging ran on 433 billboards from 31 May to 5 June across the United States, with one million impressions.

And once again this year the multinational conglomerate LG Electronics Inc. partnered with UNEP by playing the WED campaign video on its outdoor billboards in New York's Times Square and London's Piccadilly Circus from 31 May to 16 June.

In Mexico City in June, four videos commemorating WED, including a video by the popular puppet Jaguando of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas, were projected on the advertising screens of stations across the Mexico City Metro System, with an estimated daily reach of 3.4 million people.

Travelers arriving and departing Beirut Airport in Lebanon, Carrasco Airport

in Montevideo, Uruguay, as well as airports across Argentina and Paraguay including Buenos Aires and Asuncion saw WED messages via airport screens, while Montevideo City Hall illuminated main monuments in the city green.





FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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