



Sea Level Rise

Selected Online Resources

“Rising seas are a crisis entirely of humanity’s making. The world must act, and answer the SOS before it is too late.”

[António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General](#)

Rising sea levels are the result of ocean warming and the melting of glaciers and ice sheets, phenomena which are the direct consequences of climate change.

[What is sea level rise and why does it matter to our future? \(UN News, 26 August 2024\)](#)

UN Entities

- United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) - Sea-Level Rise Declaration 2026: <https://sdgs.un.org/universal/sea-level-rise-declaration-2026-61065>
 - Global Online Stakeholder Consultation - Inputs to the Declaration of Sea Level Rise: https://sdgs.un.org/universal/sea-level-rise-declaration-2026-61065#stakeholder_engagement
- United Nations. International Law Commission. Study Group on Sea-level Rise in Relation to International Law: https://legal.un.org/ilc/guide/8_9.shtml
- Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) - Essential Climate Variables - Sea Level: <https://gcos.wmo.int/en/essential-climate-variables/sea-level>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): <https://www.ipcc.ch/>
- United Nations Climate Change: <https://unfccc.int>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC): <https://www.ioc.unesco.org/>
 - see also: The Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS): <https://gloss-sealevel.org/>
The Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS) is an international sea level monitoring program designed to produce high-quality *in situ* sea level observations to support a broad research and operational user base. GLOSS was established by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in 1985 and it is currently formed by over 90 nations across the globe.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - Nexus of the Ocean and Climate: <https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/nexus-ocean-and-climate>
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) - Sendai Framework Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction – Sea Level Rise: <https://www.undrr.org/understanding-disaster-risk/terminology/hips/en0023>
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO): <https://wmo.int/>

- International Court of Justice - Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/187>
 - General Assembly votes to seek World Court's opinion, in quest for 'bolder' climate action (UN News, 29 March 2023): <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1135142>

UN Conferences & Events

- High-level plenary meeting on addressing the existential threats posed by sea level rise, 25 September 2024
<https://www.un.org/pga/79/sea-level/>
<https://www.un.org/en/high-level-week-2024/#sealevelrise>
 - Sea-level rise 'finally' on global agenda, General Assembly hears, as world leaders urge action to turn tide; affected Nations call for legal measures to protect statehood, seek climate justice, financing (SEA/2199, 25 September 2024): <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sea2199.doc.htm>
- Security Council Meeting, 14 February 2023: Threats to international peace and security - Sea-level rise: implications for international peace and security
 - Concept Note: <https://undocs.org/S/2023/79>
 - Peacebuilding Commission advice: <https://undocs.org/S/2023/106>
 - Press Release: <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15199.doc.htm>
 - Meeting Records: <https://undocs.org/S/PV.9260> and [https://undocs.org/S/PV.9260\(Resumption1\)](https://undocs.org/S/PV.9260(Resumption1))

Selected Publications & Documents

- UN documents on "Sea Level": <https://tinyurl.com/3kp5zj7m>
- Future sea-level rise is certain, but the amount and speed are uncertain (In: WMO Bulletin Vol. 74 (2) – 2025): <https://wmo.int/media/magazine-article/future-sea-level-rise-certain-amount-and-speed-are-uncertain>
- Final report of the Study Group on sea-level rise in relation to international law (2025): https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/reports/8_9_2025.pdf
- Surging seas in a warming world: The latest science on present-day impacts and future projections of sea-level rise (Technical Brief, 26 August 2024): <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/reports/sea-level-rise>
- State of the Climate in South-West Pacific 2023 (WMO, August 2024): <https://library.wmo.int/records/item/68995-state-of-the-climate-in-south-west-pacific-2023>
- IOC/UNESCO State of the Ocean Report 2024: <https://www.ioc.unesco.org/en/stor2024>
- International Law Aspects of Sea Level Rise (World Bank, 2023): <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/40584>
- Legal Dimensions of Sea Level Rise: Pacific Perspectives (World Bank, 2021): <https://hdl.handle.net/10986/35881>
- Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (IPCC, 2019): <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/>
 - Chapter 4: Sea Level Rise and Implications for Low-Lying Islands, Coasts and Communities: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/chapter/chapter-4-sea-level-rise-and-implications-for-low-lying-islands-coasts-and-communities/>
- Sea-level rise and variability: a summary for policy makers (IOC, 2010): <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000189369>

Selected Statements and Speeches by UN Officials

- PGA Remarks at the High-Level plenary meeting on addressing the existential threats posed by sea-level rise (25 September 2024): <https://www.un.org/pga/79/2024/09/25/pga-remarks-at-the-high-level-plenary-meeting-on-addressing-the-existential-threats-posed-by-sea-level-rise/>
- 'Time to turn the tide, save ourselves from rising seas,' says Secretary-General at High-Level Meeting (SG/SM/22383, 25 September 2024): <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sqsm22383.doc.htm>
- Secretary-General's press conference on sea level rise (27 August 2024 Nuku'alofa, Tonga): <https://www.un.org/sq/en/content/sq/press-encounter/2024-08-27/secretary-generals-press-conference-sea-level-rise>
- Secretary-General, at Pacific Island Forum Opening Ceremony, says greater financial, technological support for region crucial to protect climate, save world (SG/SM/22342, 26 August 2024): <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sqsm22342.doc.htm>
- Secretary-General's press encounter at UN House in Apia, Samoa (23 August 2024): <https://www.un.org/sq/en/content/sq/press-encounter/2024-08-23/secretary-generals-press-encounter-un-house-apia-samoa>
- Leaders 'Must Step Up and Act — Now' to address Climate Change, says Secretary-General, in Message on Launch of Global Report (SG/SM/22168, 19 March 2024): <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sqsm22168.doc.htm>
- Stressing rising seas already creating instability, conflict, Secretary-General says Security Council has critical role in addressing devastating challenges (SG/SM/21688, 14 February 2023) <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sqsm21688.doc.htm>

Further information

- Reviewing International Law Commission's Report, Sixth Committee speakers debate state officials' immunity beyond 'Troika', sea level rise's impact on statehood (GA/L/3729, 24 October 2024): <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gal3729.doc.htm>
- UN Video: Sea Level Rise - 5 Facts (24 September 2024): <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1d/k1djf08xys>
- Audiovisual Library of International Law: Sea-Level Rise in relation to International Law - A Concrete Contribution by the International Law Commission to Solving a Problem of Pressing Concern for the International Community / by Dr. Bogdan Aurescu: https://legal.un.org/avl/lis/Aurescu_LS.html
- UNEP, Maldives partner to address climate change and other environmental threats (30 August 2024): <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/unep-maldives-partner-address-climate-change-and-other-environmental-threats>
- UNDP - Notes from Tuvalu: Leading the way in adapting to sea-level rise (19 July 2023): <https://www.undp.org/blog/notes-tuvalu-leading-way-adapting-sea-level-rise>
- PODCAST: The link between migration, the climate crisis, and human rights (17 February 2023): <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2023/02/1132307>
- If you're not thinking about the climate impacts of thawing permafrost, (here's why) you should be (UN News, 30 January 2022): <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/01/1110722>
- World Bank - Adapting to rising sea levels in Marshall Islands (22 October 2021): <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8c715dcc5781421ebff46f35ef34a04d>
- UNHCR - Climate change and displacement: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/climate-change-and-displacement>
- UNRIC Library Backgrounder on Climate Change: <https://unric.org/en/unric-library-backgrounder-climate-change/>