



World Day for Glaciers
19 March 2026, 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.
CR6, UN Headquarters, New York

Concept Note:

“Glaciers in a Changing World: Safeguarding the Planet's Cryosphere”

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Glaciers are critical indicators of climate change and vital sources of freshwater for millions of people worldwide. Their rapid retreat has profound impacts on sea-level rise, biodiversity, and regional ecosystems. They also affect education systems, livelihoods and cultural practices in mountain and downstream communities. Despite their significance, glaciers are often underrepresented in global climate discussions, including within global disaster risk reduction, environmental and education policy framework.

This event aims to elevate the global dialogue on glacier protection, share the latest scientific findings, and foster international cooperation on adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable management of glacial ecosystems.

Objectives

1. **Raise Awareness:** Highlight the scientific, environmental, and socio-economic importance of glaciers.
2. **Promote Scientific Exchange:** Present the latest glacier research, including melting trends, downstream impacts, and climate projections.
3. **Strengthen Policy Action:** Discuss strategies for glacier preservation and climate adaptation, including pathways to limit glacier loss and strategies for transboundary water cooperation in glacier- and mountain-region contexts.
4. **Mobilize Partnerships:** Encourage collaboration between governments, UN agencies, NGOs, scientific institutions, and local communities.

2025 AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF GLACIERS' PRESERVATION

The declaration of 2025 as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation highlights the crucial role glaciers play in sustaining hydrological and climate systems. Glacier loss, a visible and irreversible sign of climate change, threatens freshwater reservoirs, affects sea levels, ocean circulation, biodiversity, and weather patterns. Glacier loss has implications for water, food, energy, and economic insecurity across world regions.

Adopted through UN General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/77/158](#), the initiative aims to raise awareness of glaciers’ significance in the climate system and their socio-economic impacts. Protecting glaciers is vital to achieving SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation and SDG 13 on climate action, both increasingly at risk from glacial retreat. In conjunction with the release of the 2025 World Water Development Report ‘Mountains and glaciers: Water towers’, the event will also provide critical insights into the role glaciers play as the "water towers" of the world, offering a scientific basis for stronger international cooperation.

In this context, the First High-Level International Conference on Glacier Preservation, held in May 2025 in Dushanbe, convened heads of state, UN agencies, scientists, youth representatives, civil society, and financial institutions to address the climate, water, and socio-economic challenges posed by glacier retreat and to catalyze coordinated global action.

FOUNDATION FOR THE DECADE OF ACTION FOR CRYOSPHERIC SCIENCES

The joint celebration of the World Day for Glaciers and World Water Day holds even greater significance within the broader context of the UN General Assembly’s adoption of the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025–2034) through Resolution [A/RES/78/321](#). This decade-long initiative calls for intensified global collaboration to enhance scientific understanding of cryospheric changes, glaciers, sea ice, permafrost, and snow cover, and their far-reaching impacts on the planet.

The IYGP 2025 is designed to serve as a launchpad for the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences. It will lay the groundwork by fostering global cooperation on research, monitoring, and data-sharing to better predict the consequences of cryospheric changes on water resources, sea levels, and ecosystems.

HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

The event on March 19 will bring together member states, policymakers, scientists, and civil society to address glacier preservation and cryospheric change. They aim to raise awareness of glaciers' role in the climate system and translate scientific evidence into policy-relevant action, while sharing best practices and identifying evidence-based pathways to mitigate their accelerated melting.

CO-SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

The event is co-sponsored by Nepal, Pakistan, Switzerland, Tajikistan, UNESCO, WMO, UNDESA, UNDRR, IUCN.

Agenda

DRAFT

13:15 - 13:25	Keynote Address: High-level representative of Tajikistan (10 min)
13:25 – 13:45	<p>Moderator: Dr. Morgan Seag, Director, Climate Analytics North America Office</p> <p>Statements by co-sponsors (3 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal • Pakistan • Switzerland

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO • WMO • UNDESA • UNDRR • IUCN
13:45 - 14:05	<p>Panel Discussion (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Matthias Vuille, Distinguished Professor; Department of Atmospheric & Environmental Sciences University at Albany (SUNY); • Dr Leigh Stearns, Professor Graduate Chair, University of Pennsylvania; • Prof. Stephen Pekar, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Queens College, CUNY <p><i>Guiding questions include:</i></p> <p>What is the current state of Glaciers and cryosphere, and what do the latest monitoring systems and climate science tell us about emerging trends and future projections for glacier change?</p> <p>How is glaciers retreat affecting different regions and countries, including impacts on SIDS and LDCs?</p> <p>What evidence-based solutions are available to slow or stabilize glacier loss and to support communities to adapt to unavoidable changes?</p> <p>How can indigenous, local and cultural knowledge contribute to more effective and inclusive approaches to glacier governance and management?</p>
14:05 - 14:25	Interactive Session / Statements: Audience engagement and Q&A (20 min)
14:25 - 14:30	Closing Remarks: Highlight next steps for international cooperation (5 min)

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