



# ***EU WETLAND PARTNERSHIPS***

*A Call to Action for Climate, Biodiversity,  
and Sustainable Development*

*Placing Wetlands at the Heart of Global Change*



**Wetlands**  
INTERNATIONAL

# Introduction

Lakes and rivers, swamps, peatlands, deltas, tidal flats, mangroves, coasts ... are all wetlands. These precious ecosystems are not only essential for biodiversity and climate resilience but also for sustaining livelihoods and economies from local to regional scale. They are being lost and degraded faster than any other ecosystem, impacting people and nature.

It's time to take decisive action that mobilises funding to support large scale integrated wetland landscape restoration and conservation interventions to underpin sustainable development and a just transition.

## Our Call to Action to the European Union

The European Union (EU) has a vital role to play in safeguarding our planet's wetlands. We call on the EU to forge EU Wetland Partnerships with partner countries, driven by a shared commitment to address the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and by the understanding that healthy wetlands contribute to national and local economies.

## What Are EU Wetland Partnerships?

**Wetland Partnerships are envisaged as agreements between the EU, its member states, and partner countries, tailored to their local needs. They provide the framework for investments to enhance wetlands to underpin a stable economy and climate resilience whilst delivering against biodiversity objectives.**

Wetland Partnerships aim at mobilising green investments but with a social innovation impact, by fostering decent green job creation, sustainable development, supporting the rights of indigenous peoples, youth and women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, as enshrined in the Global Gateway Strategy.

As it is for the EU Forest Partnerships, Wetland Partnerships will deliver on the European Green Deal priorities as well as the EU's development cooperation objectives including poverty and inequality reduction, peace and security and human rights and contribute to addressing the EU's international commitments. They will be implemented through Global Gateway projects developed and delivered through Team Europe Initiatives together with governments, civil society and the private sector in partner countries.

### Why Wetland Partnerships and not just expanding existing agreements?

**1. Urgency:** Wetlands are the most threatened type of ecosystem, disappearing at alarming rates, three times faster than forests. Around the world they play a major role underpinning economy, livelihoods, climate resilience and biodiversity. They demand focus and attention and yet they are typically overlooked or insufficiently addressed in other environmental frameworks.

Wetlands are nature-based solutions (NBS) that limit floods, maintain water supplies in droughts, manage the nutrients in soil, replenish underground water reserves, regulate water quality and sustain freshwater biodiversity. They store huge amounts of carbon – often many times more than forests. They are our climate super heroes slowing the rate of change and providing us with the means to adapt. It's time to take decisive action.

**2. Leadership:** The EU can lead the way. Around the world almost all governments, including European ones, have committed to global goals and targets on climate, biodiversity, water, land degradation, and sustainable development where wetlands play a critical role. 172 countries have ratified the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands itself, including all EU member states. 150 governments ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. In 2022 the Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted, setting out an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050.

By developing and committing to Wetland Partnerships, the EU will increase its international leadership role, leading by example, through the support of signatory partner countries in the implementation of global conventions and commitments. The creation of Wetland Partnerships would also be a way to enhance the success of initiatives such as the [Freshwater Challenge](#) the [Mangrove Breakthrough](#), and the [Global Peatlands Initiative](#).

### How could this be taken forward?

By connecting existing European leadership and global commitments to help mobilise Wetland Partnerships. Upcoming meetings of global conventions can be an excellent moment for showcasing Wetland Partnerships, the EU's role and for convening partners to identify synergies and alignment.

The Wetland Partnerships can be a means to align global conventions to deliver results for wetlands. For instance, the first Global Stocktake under the UNFCCC has recognised the critical role of protecting, conserving and restoring water and water-related ecosystems in delivering climate adaptation benefits and co-benefits while ensuring social and environmental safeguards. The Council recently called for enhanced collaboration between Convention secretariats of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), looking forward to the adoption of an action oriented Pact at the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.

Wetland Partnerships can help the EU deliver on commitments to their partners to:

- Upgrade and implement their NDCs and NBSAPs by supporting the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, fostering circular and low carbon economies, promoting better management of natural resources and tackling pollution, waste and sanitation.

- Transform food systems by making them more sustainable, and promoting a sustainable urban development agenda, which will entail jobs and growth and ensure sustainable and smart mobility for all.
- Work closely with the EU to accelerate the green transition and support the implementation of global commitments.

### Where should we start? Suggested priority Wetland Partnerships

The Pantanal (Brazil), Inner Niger Delta (Mali), The Sudd (South Sudan) are examples of major wetlands that support extraordinary biodiversity and underpin the livelihoods and resilience of millions of people. They are at risk from growing socio economic pressures and risk accelerating the effects of climate change.

An EU Wetland Partnership on the Pantanal, the world's largest wetland, should aim to drive the sustainable management of this uniquely biodiverse region and, the prosperity of communities that inhabit this vast wetland.

An EU Wetland Partnerships for a Secured Sahel should aim to address the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security.

These Wetland Partnerships, green partnerships would support the EU's diplomatic efforts in promoting the green transition and supporting the implementation of global climate and environment commitments, to anchor and consolidate them, and to strengthen EU green diplomacy, as mentioned in the Council conclusions on Green diplomacy.

***Investing in wetlands is investing in the future of humanity.***

Our vision is a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide. Our mission is to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.



*Learn more about Wetland Partnerships*



*For further information please visit our website or contact our offices*

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