SAVE OUR GLACIERS

WORLD WATER DAY 2025: FACTSHEET

UN WATER

22 MARCH
WORLD WATER DAY

2025 Glacier Preservation

1. Quick facts about World Water Day

When is World Water Day?

World Water Day is held on 22 March every year.

When did it start?

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly designated 22 March as World Water Day[1]. This Observance is one of the largest international days, together with Human Rights Day (10 December), International Women's Day (8 March), and the International Day of Peace (21 September).

UN-Water, the UN's inter-agency coordination mechanism on water and sanitation, is mandated to coordinate World Water Day, which is coordinated by one or several UN-Water Members and Partners and a dedicated Task Force in support of UN Member States and other Stakeholders.

What is the aim?

World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water.[2] It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.[3]

What happens on World Water Day?

In the lead-up to 22 March, people and organizations host World Water Day events and participate in the global public campaign, launched in the preceding months by UN-Water on www.worldwaterday.org and on social media with the hashtag #WorldWaterDay.

What is the theme of World Water Day 2025?

The theme of World Water Day 2025 is 'Glacier Preservation'. UN-Water sets the annual theme. Previous themes can be found at www.unwater.org/our-work/world-water-day

[1] UN Resolution A7RES/47/193: https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F47%2F193&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False
[2] WHO/UNICEF: https://www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023
[3] UN DESA: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6

How will World Water Day 2025 be celebrated?

As 2025 is the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, a joint event will be held on 21 March to celebrate World Water Day and the first-ever World Day of Glaciers. At the event, to be held at UN Headquarters in New York, the 2025 edition of the *UN World Water Development Report* will be released, focusing on the same topic as the campaign and recommending policy direction to decision makers. This flagship report is published by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water, with its production coordinated by the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).[4]

International Year of Glaciers' Preservation and World Day for Glaciers[5]

In December 2022, the UNGA adopted a resolution declaring 2025 as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation (see Resolution A/RES/77/158), along with proclaiming March 21st of each year as World Day for Glaciers starting in 2025. These initiatives aim to increase global awareness about the vital role of glaciers, snow, and ice in the climate system and water cycle, and to highlight the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the changes in the Earth's cryosphere. They also promote sharing best practices and knowledge on addressing the accelerated melting of glaciers and its consequences.

Explore more at www.un-glaciers.org

2. The theme of World Water Day 2025: Glacier preservation

What are the key messages of the World Water Day 2025 campaign?[6]

- **Glaciers are melting faster than ever.** As the planet gets hotter due to climate change, our frozen world is shrinking, making the water cycle more unpredictable and extreme.
- **Glacial retreat threatens devastation.** For billions of people, meltwater flows are changing, causing floods, droughts, landslides and sea level rise, and damaging ecosystems.
- **Glacier preservation is a survival strategy.** We must work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and manage meltwater more sustainably for people and the planet.

[4] UN-Water: https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report
[5] International Year of Glaciers' Preservation: https://www.un-glaciers.org/en
[6] UN World Water Day: https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day

3. What is the state of glaciers today?

What are glaciers?

A glacier is a river of ice, often covered in snow, slowly moving down a valley from mountainous areas, with its meltwaters flowing downstream.

Why are glaciers important?

Glaciers are critical to the water cycle. They provide essential supplies of fresh water for drinking water and sanitation systems, agriculture, industry, clean energy production and healthy ecosystems.

Glaciers also contribute to oceanic circulation, regulating heat, carbon dioxide, and nutrients that sustain food webs across the globe.

By reflecting vast amounts of solar radiation into space, glaciers help cool the Earth, acting as a natural shield against excessive warming.[7]

What is happening to glaciers?

Glaciers are melting faster than ever before.[8]

Glaciers are typically fed by snowfall during winter and lose ice during summer. Higher temperatures due to climate change lead to longer summer and shorter winter periods, heat waves during summers, less snow and more rain. Changes in glaciers can have severe impacts on communities and ecosystems, increasing the risk of geohazards, changing regional water availability, and contributing to global sea-level rise.[9]

How can we tell that glaciers are changing?

For more than 130 years, glaciers around the globe have been systematically monitored with annual measurements in the field and by different remote sensing techniques.[10]

Global datasets and information on glaciers are crucial for scientific assessments as well as for political decisions regarding adaptation and mitigation strategies.[11]

[7] IPCC: https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/4/2019/12/02_Summary-for-Policymakers_SPM.pdf
[8] UNESCO: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-heritage-glaciers-sentinels-climate-change
[9] Bojinski, S., et al, 2014: https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-13-00047.1
[10] World Glacier Monitoring Service: www.wgms.ch
[11] IPCC: www.ipcc.ch

What is the cryosphere?[12]

The word "cryosphere" comes from the Greek word "kryos" for frost or ice cold. The cryosphere comprises snow cover, glaciers, ice sheets, ice shelves, icebergs, sea ice, lake ice, river ice, permafrost, and seasonally frozen ground, and solid precipitation.

The state of the cryosphere is also a useful indicator for climate variability and change. Improved monitoring is critical to understanding Earth's weather, climate, and water cycles.

In 2024, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences, 2025-2034,[13] to address the challenges associated with melting glaciers and changes to the cryosphere by advancing related scientific research and monitoring.

Explore more about the cryosphere at www.wmo.int/topics/cryosphere

4. What is being done to adapt and mitigate?

There is still time to protect and preserve glaciers, as vital fresh water sources and climate stabilizers, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adopting transformative adaptation and mitigation strategies.[14]

The UN has outlined several strategies for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change on glaciers:

- **Reducing global emissions**: The urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (The Paris Agreement)[15] is vital to slow the melting of glaciers and reduce the associated risks like rising sea levels, fresh water shortages, floods or landslides.[16] There are calls for cutting global emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources.[17]

- **Strengthening water resource management**: Managing glacial runoff is critical for preventing both water shortages and excessive flooding. There is an urgent need for improved water infrastructure in many areas to store seasonal glacial meltwater, and for countries to improve their water efficiency and reuse systems.[18]

[12] WMO: https://wmo.int/topics/cryosphere
[13] UN Resolution A78/L.99: https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltd/n24/214/35/pdf/n2421435.pdf
[14] https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/SROCC_FAQs.pdf
[15] UNFCCC: https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement
[16] UNESCO: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383551
[17] WMO: https://wmo.int/publication-series/state-of-global-water-resources-2023
[18] UNESCO: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-heritage-glaciers-sentinels-climate-change

- **Adaptation planning for vulnerable communities**: Comprehensive adaptation strategies are needed for populations that rely on glaciers for water. This includes building more resilient agricultural systems, diversifying local economies, and improving disaster response systems in areas threatened by glacier-related flooding and sea level rise.[19]

- **Ecosystem restoration**: Protecting and restoring ecosystems around glaciers helps stabilize water flows, maintains biodiversity, and supports the adaptation of local communities to changing water patterns.[20]

- **International cooperation**: For countries that share transboundary water resources from glaciers, sharing knowledge, data, and strategies for water conservation is key to managing the impact of glacier melt on a regional scale.[21]

5. What can I do to help?

No matter where we live, glaciers are critical to our water future.

Young people, adults, families, community groups, organizations, institutions and governments – everyone can take action as part of the World Water Day 2025 campaign on glacier preservation.

There are three ways to get involved:

Learn

• Explore the importance of glaciers to the water cycle and the climate, and read inspirational stories from around the world: https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day

• Dive into UN-Water's Water Facts: https://www.unwater.org/water-facts

• Read the 2025 UN World Water Development Report: https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report

• Look into the water and sanitation issues in your country or region on the SDG 6 Data Portal: https://www.sdg6data.org/en

[19] WMO: https://wmo.int/publication-series/state-of-global-water-resources-2023
[20] UNESCO: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-heritage-glaciers-sentinels-climate-change
[21] WMO: https://wmo.int/publication-series/state-of-global-water-resources-2023

Share

• Post World Water Day social media assets using #WorldWaterDay to generate debate and raise awareness – available at https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day/resources

• Develop your own World Water Day content, editable campaign resources are found at https://trello.com/b/vDCctDEY/world-water-day

• Are you already working in the field of glacier preservation or climate change adaptation, and would like to get involved in the campaign? Send us an email to campaigns@unwater.org and tell us more about your work and how you could contribute to World Water Day 2025.

Act

Every year, tens of thousands of people get involved in the World Water Day campaign.

Share photos from your activities using #WorldWaterDay.

Here are some examples of things you can do to raise awareness and inspire action to preserve glaciers and adapt to a changing climate:

- Make an artwork, installation, song or film.
- Host a photo contest or local exhibition.
- Organize a walking trip into local mountains or highlands to see glaciers or rivers, discover the mountain region and get a view of downstream water ecosystems.
- Give a talk in your school, university, community, office or organization.
- Host a concert, play or sports event.
- If you are a teacher or student, organize a lesson/do an activity/visit a natural science museum (see the World Water Day 2025 Activation Kit: www.un.org/en/observances/water-day/resources).
- Organize a community clean-up of local streams, rivers, lakes, springs and beaches.
- Contribute to or launch citizen science participatory projects aimed at promoting knowledge of local water bodies, and collecting data and information.

6. Key facts about glacial loss and its impacts

- Glacier mass loss has doubled in the past 20 years, mainly driven by human-induced climate change. Many glaciers in regions like the Andes and Himalayas could disappear by 2100 if current trends continue.[22]
- Glaciers store approximately 70% of the world's fresh water, making them the largest reservoir of fresh water on Earth.[23]
- Nearly 2 billion people rely on water from glaciers, snowmelt and mountain run-off for drinking, agriculture, and energy production.[24]
- Increased glacier melting contributes significantly to global sea-level rise, with today's sea level about 20 cm higher than in 1900.[25]
- Glaciers reflect sunlight due to their bright surfaces, helping to regulate Earth's temperature. As they melt, this reflective surface shrinks, causing more heat absorption, which accelerates global warming.[26]
- Limiting global warming to 1.5°C could save glaciers in two-thirds of World Heritage sites.[27]

Explore more facts on **mountains and climate change** (https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/outreach/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FactSheet_Mountains.pdf) and on the **cryosphere** (https://wmo.int/topics/cryosphere).

[22] WMO: https://library.wmo.int/viewer/69033
[23] WMO: https://wmo.int/topics/cryosphere
[24] UN-Water/UNESCO: https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report
[25] IPCC: https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/SROCC_FAQs.pdf
[26] WMO: https://wmo.int/publication-series/state-of-global-water-resources-2023
[27] UNESCO/IUCN: https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2022-040-En.pdf