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. 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)

Selected Publications & Documents

- UN documents on "Sea Level": https://tinyurl.com/3kp5zj7m
- 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/sgsm22383.doc.htm
- Secretary-General's press conference on sea level rise (27 August 2024 Nuku'alofa, Tonga): https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/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/sgsm22342.doc.htm

- Secretary-General's press encounter at UN House in Apia, Samoa (23 August 2024): https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/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/sgsm22168.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/sgsm21688.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/ls/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/