

Más de 570 expertos de 97 países instan a las Naciones Unidas a Reforzar la protección de la biodiversidad del agua dulce

*La humanidad se enfrenta a pérdidas catastróficas de especies y hábitats acuáticos
Los líderes mundiales deben dar prioridad a las acciones urgentes y específicas
para proteger y restaurar los ecosistemas de agua dulce y respetar los derechos de las
comunidades indígenas y comunidades indígenas y marginadas afectadas
desproporcionadamente por estas pérdidas*

11 de Octubre, 2021

Para: Honorable Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Secretaria Ejecutiva del Convenio de Biodiversidad de la ONU
Honorable Francis Ogwal y Honorable Basile Van Havre, Copresidentes del Grupo de Trabajo del Marco Global de Biodiversidad Post-2020
Delegados de la Conferencia de las Partes del Convenio sobre Diversidad Biológica

Como científicos, ingenieros, investigadores, profesionales y líderes indígenas y comunitarios con experiencia en ecología, hidrología, ingeniería, agricultura, pesca, energía, economía, planificación ambiental, salud pública, derecho y derechos indígenas, los abajo firmantes 573, de 97 países, les escribimos para destacar la alarmante pérdida de biodiversidad de agua dulce y les instamos a que en la Decimoquinta Reunión de la Conferencia de las Partes del Convenio sobre la Diversidad Biológica tomen medidas para proteger y restaurar las aguas continentales, los flujos de agua dulce y los hábitats y especies acuáticas que son vitales para la humanidad y la salud del planeta.

El Convenio sobre la Diversidad Biológica (CDB) reconoce y establece claramente que la biodiversidad es fundamental para el bienestar humano y un planeta sano, y que la biodiversidad se está deteriorando en todo el mundo a un ritmo que se prevé que empeore. Sin embargo, el Marco de Acción Mundial sobre la Diversidad Biológica posterior a 2020 y otros acuerdos multilaterales transversales y programas relacionados no reconocen ni priorizan adecuadamente los objetivos específicos, las metas y las orientaciones de aplicación necesarias para proteger los ecosistemas de agua dulce, a diferencia de los que protegen la vida en la tierra y en el mar. **Les instamos a que traten los ecosistemas de agua dulce con el mismo respeto y la misma atención que se presta a los sistemas terrestres y marinos.** De hecho, el cumplimiento de los objetivos de biodiversidad terrestre y marina en el Marco Post-2020 depende de la protección de los recursos de agua dulce que desempeñan un papel fundamental en el mantenimiento de estos ecosistemas.

Se suele decir que el agua es la vida. Nuestros ríos, arroyos, lagos y humedales están repletos de una increíble variedad de vida acuática.¹ Los ecosistemas de agua dulce, que cubren menos del 1% de la superficie de la Tierra, albergan más del 10% de todas las especies y son vitales para la vida terrestre y oceánica. Sin embargo, hemos gestionado los sistemas de agua dulce principalmente para satisfacer las necesidades humanas, lo que ha

¹ Balian, E. V., Segers, H., Lévêque, C., & Martens, K. (2008). The Freshwater Animal Diversity Assessment: An overview of the results. *Hydrobiologia*. Springer Netherlands. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10750-007-9246-3>

dado lugar a sistemas acuáticos muy manipulados y degradados. Hemos embalsado y desviado ríos, rellenado y transformado humedales, erosionado costas, contaminado el agua, sobreexplotado peces de agua dulce y aves acuáticas, e introducido especies invasoras.

Las catastróficas disminuciones derivadas de estas actividades están bien documentadas.² Según la Convención Ramsar sobre los Humedales, los humedales se están perdiendo tres veces más rápido que los bosques,³ con un 64% de ellos perdidos en todo el mundo desde 1900.⁴ De los largos sistemas fluviales del mundo, dos tercios se han fragmentado y sólo una cuarta parte sigue fluyendo hacia el mar, rompiendo la conectividad que sustenta las funciones del ecosistema.⁵ Solo en los últimos cincuenta años, las poblaciones de vertebrados de agua dulce han disminuido en un 84%, lo que supone más del doble de las disminuciones observadas para las especies terrestres o marinas, según ONU-Agua.⁶ Desde 1970, las especies de peces migratorios han disminuido en un 75%, y los grandes peces emblemáticos, como el esturión y el siluro, en un 91%.⁷ Hoy en día, las especies de agua dulce están más amenazadas que la vida en la tierra o en el mar, con casi un tercio de las especies de peces de agua dulce en peligro de extinción.⁸

El daño se está acelerando. Los ríos y humedales que aún fluyen libremente están amenazados por miles de presas y proyectos de desarrollo que modificarán y degradarán los sistemas acuáticos, así como los sistemas ribereños interdependientes que también sustentan una gran biodiversidad terrestre y servicios ecosistémicos. Se prevé que estos problemas empeoren ante el cambio climático y la continua sobreexplotación y contaminación, agravando aún más la pobreza, la inseguridad alimentaria y las amenazas a la salud de las comunidades. El desprecio por los recursos de agua dulce, los hábitats y las especies representa un fracaso global de la sociedad a la hora de actuar ante las evidencias

² Albert, J.S., Destouni, G., Duke-Sylvester, S.M. *et al.* Scientists' warning to humanity on the freshwater biodiversity crisis. *Ambio* 50, 85–94 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-020-01318-8>

³ Global Wetland Outlook: State of the world's wetlands and their services to people, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. (2018) <https://www.global-wetland-outlook.ramsar.org>

⁴ Wetlands: a global disappearing act, Fact Sheet 3.2, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (no date) https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/factsheet3_global_disappearing_act_0.pdf

⁵ Grill, G., Lehner, B., Thieme, M., Geenen, B., Tickner, D., Antonelli, F., Babu, S., Borrelli, P., Cheng, L., Crochetiere, H., Ehalt Macedo, H., Filgueiras, R., Goichot, M., Higgins, J., Hogan, Z., Lip, B., McClain, M. E., Meng, J., Mulligan, M., Nilsson, C., Olden, J., Opperman, J., Petry, P., Reidy Liermann, C., Sáenz, L., Salinas-Rodríguez, S., Schelle, P., Schmitt, R., Snider, J., Tan, F., Tockner, K., Valdujo, P., van Soesbergen, A., Zarfl, C. (2019). Mapping the world's free-flowing rivers. *Nature*, 569 (7755), 215–221. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-019-1111-9>

⁶ UN-Water input on Freshwater-Biodiversity Linkages: Response to the Zero-Draft Document from the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. (February 2020) <https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-input-on-freshwater-biodiversity-linkages-response-to-the-zero-draft-document-from-the-open-ended-working-group-on-the-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework/>

⁷ Deinet, S., Scott-Gatty, K., Rotton, H., Twardek, W. M., Marconi, V., McRae, L., Baumgartner, L. J., Brink, K., Claussen, J. E., Cooke, S. J., Darwall, W., Eriksson, B. K., Garcia de Leaniz, C., Hogan, Z., Royte, J., Silva, L. G. M., Thieme, M. L., Tickner, D., Waldman, J., Wanningen, H., Weyl, O. L. F., Berkhuysen, A. (2020). The Living Planet Index (LPI) for migratory freshwater fish - Technical Report. World Fish Migration Foundation, The Netherlands. https://worldfishmigrationfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LPI_report_2020.pdf

⁸ Hughes, Kathy, (lead author). (2021) "The World's Forgotten Fishes," published by World Wildlife Fund and 15 organizations and alliances. https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/world_s_forgotten_fishes_report_final_1.pdf

que documentan las graves consecuencias para la vida humana y la salud planetaria de la pérdida de los ecosistemas acuáticos.

La ciencia es clara: un futuro sostenible, saludable, justo y resiliente depende de la protección y restauración de nuestros ecosistemas de agua dulce y de la diversidad ecológica y humana que sustentan. La conservación y restauración de nuestros recursos globales de agua dulce debe convertirse en un motor prominente en las decisiones de gobernanza, así como en las políticas que guían esas decisiones, al tiempo que se centran en los derechos, la participación y las necesidades de las comunidades indígenas y marginadas que se ven desproporcionadamente afectadas por las injusticias ambientales y climáticas. Tal y como se indica en la Perspectiva Mundial sobre la Diversidad Biológica 5 del CDB, entre las áreas de acción necesarias se encuentran: la protección de los ríos de flujo libre y de los hábitats críticos, el restablecimiento de la conectividad de los hábitats y de los caudales ecológicos, la mejora de la calidad del agua, el cese de la sobreexplotación de los recursos hídricos de agua dulce y la mejora de la calidad del agua, y prevenir el aumento de especies invasoras.⁹

Además de la amplia evidencia científica que respalda nuestra posición, existen soluciones viables y prácticas innovadoras que están demostrando ser exitosas a la hora de priorizar la salud de las cuencas hidrográficas y que están listas para ser ampliadas, como los conocimientos y las prácticas indígenas y tradicionales, la agroecología regenerativa, las ciudades ecológicas, las tecnologías de tratamiento de aguas residuales y de conservación del agua, la gestión y el desarrollo dirigidos por la comunidad y las cooperativas pesqueras, entre muchas otras.

Como Secretaría Ejecutiva, Copresidentes y personas delegadas de la Decimoquinta Conferencia de las Partes del Convenio sobre Diversidad Biológica, les pedimos respetuosamente que se aseguren de que las metas, los indicadores y el marco de seguimiento asociado que definen los objetivos del Marco Mundial para la Diversidad Biológica posterior a 2020 representen adecuadamente las necesidades de protección, restauración y gestión sostenible del agua dulce para garantizar los beneficios de la naturaleza y las personas. Además, les pedimos que brinden el liderazgo necesario a nivel internacional, nacional y de cuenca hidrográfica para la implementación de estos objetivos con el fin de salvaguardar explícitamente los ecosistemas de agua dulce a perpetuidad.

Por favor, adopten un Marco Global de Biodiversidad Post-2020 que incorpore objetivos explícitos y diferenciados, hitos, metas de acción y mecanismos de apoyo a la implementación que integren de manera equitativa y apropiada los sistemas de agua dulce junto con los marinos y terrestres, en lugar de incluirlos implícitamente bajo los planes de protección de la tierra. Esto puede incluir la inclusión explícita de las aguas continentales en el objetivo principal de "tierra y mar". El nuevo Marco también debe reconocer y abordar las amenazas específicas y claras que contribuyen al continuo declive de la biodiversidad de agua dulce.

⁹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. (2020) *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*. Montreal. <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-en.pdf>

Con su apoyo, basado en una ciencia sólida que reconozca la amplitud de los riesgos y beneficios sociales que dependen específicamente de la protección del agua dulce, se puede adoptar una nueva ética y unos mecanismos de apoyo a la aplicación más sólidos para salvaguardar las especies, los hábitats y los ecosistemas de agua dulce y sus funciones para el bienestar de todos.

Gracias por su consideración.

Firmado por 573 expertos individuales de 97 países que son líderes de conocimiento ecológico comunitario y tradicional, científicos de agua dulce, profesionales de la gestión de ecosistemas y recursos, defensores de los derechos indígenas y abogados ambientales, y otros líderes de pensamiento.

Los firmantes aparecen en orden alfabético. Las afiliaciones institucionales se enumeran según lo indicado por los firmantes sólo con fines de identificación, y no implican la aprobación de la carta por parte de esas instituciones.

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