

**Statement by Martha Rojas Urrego  
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**Valuing water and wetlands  
World Water Day 2021**

**Valuing water**

This year's World Water Day theme of "valuing water" aims to increase understanding of water's true, multidimensional value, such that we will be better able to safeguard this critical resource for the benefit of everyone.

If we are to value water, we must also better understand and value water's source, wetlands. We cannot disconnect water from wetlands. Less than 1% of water on Earth is usable freshwater and this usable water is mostly stored in wetlands such as rivers, streams, lakes, marshes, estuaries and aquifers.

We demand more fresh water, yet destroy the means by which we get it. Nearly 90% of our wetlands, including rivers, lakes, marshes and peatlands have vanished, and we continue to lose wetlands three times faster than forests. We must better understand and value the role of wetlands in providing water.

By harvesting, storing, filtering and releasing water where and when it is needed, wetlands ensure a constant supply of clean freshwater, indispensable for consumption, irrigation and energy production, as well as for the functioning of ecosystems.

**Valuing wetlands**

Our development and economic growth require sufficient water, while the quantity and quality of water is dependent on healthy wetlands. [More than half the global GDP](#) is dependent on the services of well-functioning nature.

Interdependent and inseparable, water and wetlands are vital partners for life, providing a home to 40% of the world's species.

Wetlands, and the water in them, provide much of our food through fisheries, aquaculture and crop irrigation, and [\\$47 trillion](#) in annual services to the global economy.

With [climate change expected to increase water shortages, particularly in already dry regions, and lack of water threatening to flatline economies](#), wetlands' water management role has never been so crucial to physical and socio-economic resilience.

When we value water, we must also value wetlands. If we do not conserve and protect our wetlands, we may not have enough water for our present and future. We must stop destroying and start restoring wetlands.

On World Water Day, let us pause and reflect on the importance and value of water in our lives. And during this reflection, commit to an action to conserve and restore the world's wetlands to secure our fresh water for all.

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