

Glaciers Under Threat

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Glaciers Under Threat: The UN's Call for Action

The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** has declared **2025 as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation** and designated **March 21 as World Day for Glaciers**. This initiative aims to raise awareness, promote research, and encourage global action to protect glaciers, which are rapidly disappearing due to climate change.

What Are Glaciers?

Glaciers are massive, slow-moving ice formations created by the accumulation of snow over time. They act as **natural water reservoirs**, gradually releasing freshwater into rivers and lakes. The largest glacier complexes are found in **polar regions**, with the **Antarctic Peninsula** alone covering **81,000 km²**.

Ice Sheets and Their Importance

Ice sheets are extensive masses of glacial ice, each covering over **50,000 km²**. Currently, only the **Antarctic and Greenland Ice Sheets** remain, containing **99% of Earth's freshwater ice**. These ice sheets play a crucial role in regulating global temperatures and sea levels.

Glacial Loss: A Growing Concern

Glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. In **2023**, glaciers worldwide experienced their **greatest water loss in over 50 years**. **Switzerland alone lost 10% of its glacier mass between 2022 and 2023**. According to the **IPCC**, glaciers have been losing **273 billion tonnes of ice annually since 2000**. A **UNESCO report (2022)** warns that **one-third of World Heritage site glaciers** could vanish by **2050**.

Impacts of Glacial Melting

Glacial loss is accelerating **sea-level rise**, disrupting **weather patterns**, and threatening **water supplies for over two billion people**. It also leads to **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**, which cause sudden, devastating floods, as seen in **Sikkim (2023)**. Many cities like **Lima, La Paz, and Kathmandu** already face severe water shortages due to reduced glacial melt.

Way Forward

Protecting glaciers is crucial for **climate stability, water security, and biodiversity**. Governments must **strengthen climate policies, reduce emissions, and invest in glacier conservation**. Individuals can contribute by **reducing carbon footprints and supporting sustainable practices**. The **2025 International Year of Glaciers' Preservation** will play a vital role in driving global action and awareness.



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