# [***Crimes that affect the environment worsen climate change and biodiversity loss, says UNODC at UN Climate Change Conference***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69S6-FDH1-F0YC-N2XX-00000-00&context=1516831)

Impact News Service

November 30, 2023 Thursday

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**Length:** 708 words

**Body**

Vienna, Austria: UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has issued the following press release:

Addressing crimes that affect the environment is key to mitigating and adapting to climate change, highlighted the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) at the start of the 28th session of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP 28).

“Time is running out to avert climate catastrophe, prevent ***biodiversity*** ***loss***, and end the suffocation of our planet caused by pollution and illegal waste disposal,” said Ghada Waly, Executive Director of UNODC. “Crimes that affect the environment are serious crimes that weaken the planet ’ s resilience, threaten species with extinction, contaminate vital water resources, and undermine the rule of law and sustainable development. I urge governments and other stakeholders to take concrete action at COP28, including by integrating justice responses into the climate agenda, in order to preserve our planet and its fragile ecosystems. ”

***Biodiversity*** and climate change are integrally linked. Forests and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems capture and store carbon from the atmosphere, making them crucial in combatting climate change.

Crimes that affect the environment – such as illegal deforestation, marine pollution, wildlife trafficking, and crimes in the fisheries, waste and mining sectors – are contributing to rapid ecosystem degradation, UNODC officials warned.

These illegal activities hinder the ability of natural ecosystems to mitigate or adapt to climate change, contributing to the decline of ***biodiversity*** and the release of carbon dioxide and other harmful gases into the atmosphere.

Crimes such as illegal waste trafficking or unmanaged waste further degrade the environment by causing waste to be dumped in public ecosystems, illicit landfills or open-air incineration sites. Failing to tackle these crimes and safely manage such waste contributes to rising greenhouse gas emissions (including methane and other pollutants, estimated to account for about three per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions). Actively supporting and implementing environmentally-sound waste management practices can therefore contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while promoting the circular economy can be an effective climate mitigation strategy.

Meanwhile, illegal mining – including for minerals such as lithium, nickel, cobalt, copper, and rare earth elements required for the transition to ‘green ’ energy – is ravaging landscapes, degrading natural habitats, and disrupting vital carbon sinks. The surge in global demand for these materials is also fueling a rise in corruption and organized crime due to weak law enforcement capacities, poor compliance measures, and vulnerabilities across supply chains.

“The Global Stocktake at the COP28 is a timely opportunity to integrate measures against crimes that affect the environment in support of climate action,” added Alan Cole, Chief of UNODC ’ s Border Management Branch.“We also need to make sure that our justice systems respond to these crimes in ways that align with climate, ***biodiversity*** and circular economy agendas.'

UNODC is committed to supporting Member States in strengthening their responses against crimes that affect the environment, by providing legislative assistance, building judicial and law enforcement capacities, and facilitating international cooperation. These efforts are guided by the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the UN Convention against Corruption, for which UNODC serves as the Secretariat.

At COP28, the perspectives of the global law enforcement community will be brought into the climate change dialogue under the banner of the International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate (I2LEC), launched by the Ministry of Interior of the United Arab Emirates with UNODC in Dubai earlier this year.

The Conference of the Parties of UNFCCC is the world ’ s largest annual gathering on climate action, bringing together Heads of State, ministers and negotiators, along with climate activists, mayors, civil society representatives and CEOs. It seeks renewed solidarity between countries to deliver on the landmark Paris Agreement.

**Classification**

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newswire

**Journal Code:** INS

**Subject:** UNITED NATIONS (95%); CRIME, LAW ENFORCEMENT & CORRECTIONS (94%); ***BIODIVERSITY*** (91%); CLIMATE CHANGE (91%); CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES CRIME (91%); ***BIODIVERSITY*** CONSERVATION (90%); CLIMATE CHANGE REGULATION & POLICY (90%); CLIMATOLOGY (90%); NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS (90%); NEGATIVE NEWS (90%); POLLUTION (90%); POLLUTION & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (90%); SALTWATER ECOSYSTEMS (90%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (90%); CLIMATE ACTION (89%); EMISSIONS (89%); GREEN ECONOMY (89%); GREENHOUSE GASES (89%); NEGATIVE CRIME & LEGAL NEWS (89%); ECOSYSTEMS & HABITATS (88%); CARBON CAPTURE & STORAGE (87%); NATURAL RESOURCES (79%); OCEAN HEALTH (79%); SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS (79%); CRIMINAL JUSTICE (78%); DEFORESTATION (78%); ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES (78%); FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENT (78%); ILLEGAL DUMPING (78%); ILLEGAL LOGGING (78%); LANDFILLS (78%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (78%); MINING & ENVIRONMENT (78%); NEGATIVE MISC NEWS (78%); ORGANIZED CRIME (78%); POLLUTION MONITORING, PREVENTION & REMEDIATION (78%); RULE OF LAW (78%); SUSTAINABILITY (78%); SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY (78%); VIOLENT CRIME (78%); ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION (77%); ENVIRONMENTAL TREATIES & AGREEMENTS (77%); LAND DEGRADATION (77%); OUTPUT & DEMAND (77%); SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (77%); WILDLIFE (77%); CIRCULAR ECONOMY (75%); SOLID WASTE TREATMENT & DISPOSAL (75%); SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT (75%); WATER POLLUTION (75%); ANIMAL POACHING & TRAFFICKING (74%); CORRUPTION (73%); PRESS RELEASES (73%); SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (73%); SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES (73%); WATER RESOURCES (73%); EXECUTIVES (70%); ENERGY & UTILITY REGULATORY COMPLIANCE (64%); ECONOMY & ECONOMIC INDICATORS (60%); WATER QUALITY (54%)

**Industry:** EMISSIONS (89%); GREEN ECONOMY (89%); WASTE MANAGEMENT & REMEDIATION SERVICES (89%); DEFORESTATION (78%); FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENT (78%); ILLEGAL DUMPING (78%); ILLEGAL LOGGING (78%); LANDFILLS (78%); METHANE (78%); MINING & ENVIRONMENT (78%); SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY (78%); SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (77%); CIRCULAR ECONOMY (75%); SOLID WASTE TREATMENT & DISPOSAL (75%); SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT (75%); SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES (73%); MINES & MINING (70%); MINING & EXTRACTION (70%); NATURAL GAS (70%); ENERGY & UTILITY REGULATORY COMPLIANCE (64%)

**Geographic:** VIENNA, AUSTRIA (79%); EARTH (92%); AUSTRIA (74%)

**Load-Date:** December 1, 2023

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