

# Media headlines

January 2026

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Water is running out: the UN declares the "water bankruptcy" of a planet that lived on credit**

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**Disturbing forecast about the impact of plastic on health**

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**A new marine protection treaty comes into force**

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## Water is running out: the UN declares the "water bankruptcy" of a planet that lived on credit



*Noticias ONU, 0120/2026*

**Synopsis:** Nature's bank account is in the red. A report from the United Nations University declares that the world has entered an era of "global water bankruptcy," a point of no return for certain systems where human demand has irreversibly depleted aquifer reserves and dried up the wells of the future, with broken aquatic systems—compacted aquifers, phantom lakes, sinking deltas—incapable of recovery, putting the entire planet's water system at risk.

### The bill for waste

The global audit paints a bleak picture: 75% of the world's population lives in countries where water is scarce or unsafe; more than half of the planet's great lakes are drying up; 2 billion people live on land that is sinking due to the overexploitation of groundwater; in 50 years, wetlands equivalent to the entire surface area of the European Union have been lost. Agriculture, which consumes 70% of freshwater, is at the epicenter of the collapse.

When crops dry up in one region, the scarcity travels through food prices, impacting global food security and destabilizing economies.

The 2026 UN Water Conference, to be held in December 2026, is presented as the critical opportunity for this "water rescue."

### Mining tailings in Chile: The toxic legacy of a mining powerhouse



*Ladera Sur, 01/30/2026*

**Synopsis:** Tailings are the residue left after the extraction and concentration of minerals, composed mainly of crushed rock, water, and mineral remnants that did not reach commercial value.

These materials often contain heavy metals and other potentially toxic substances, and are deposited in large tailings ponds or reservoirs designed for their storage.

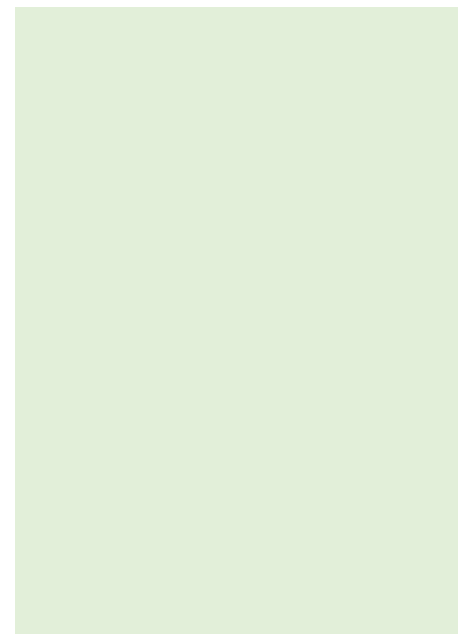
Chile is the third country in the world with the largest number of tailings deposits, after China and the United States, and it is projected that by 2026 it will have to manage more than 900 million tons of tailings material per year.

"Every time we generate one ton of copper, we are producing more than 200 tons of tailings. So we are facing a highly inefficient industry," explains Raimundo Gómez, executive director of Fundación Relaves (Tailings Foundation).

Several studies have documented that, even decades after their abandonment, tailings continue to be significant sources of heavy metal contamination.

Geochemical studies of tailings in Chile have identified potentially toxic elements such as copper, arsenic, lead, and molybdenum, which pose risks to both the environment and human health.

**N.R. This Chilean experience is important for countries that base the bulk of their economic strategy on a fundamentally dependent economy, relying on the export of minerals, agricultural products, and tourism.**



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## Venezuela: IVIC will enhance scientific training by incorporating 24 new postgraduate programs



*Ultimas noticias, 01/16/2026*

**Synopsis:** The director of the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research (IVIC), Alberto Quintero, announced the incorporation of more than 24 postgraduate programs aimed at strengthening strategic areas such as nanotechnology and biotechnology.

In the productive sector, the director highlighted the launch of the animal genetics and reproduction laboratory, which specializes in improving the genetic profiles of Venezuelan livestock to neutralize the problems arising from inbreeding.

In the last four years, seven research centers have been founded, with prominent locations in Zulia and Mérida.

In Mérida, the center plays a crucial role by sharing phytosanitary protocols with local farmers to optimize crop yields.

Quintero assured that IVIC guarantees the continuity of its research processes despite the military attack suffered on January 3rd, which completely destroyed the Mathematics Center and affected structures located almost two kilometers away.

These included laboratories linked to the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) located in the Physics Center, as well as the Ecology and Environmental Studies Centers, and the Nu-

clear Technology Unit, the only national entity certified for the dosimetric calibration of radiological equipment in the public sector.

## They study Antarctica and now we know what lies beneath the ice



*National Geographic, 01/16/2026*

**Synopsis:** A new study by an international team led by Helen Ockenden of the University of Edinburgh has mapped this submerged continent with an unprecedented level of detail.

Their tool: an innovative technique that combines satellite observations with the physics of glacial flows, eliminating the need for costly expeditions on the ground.

This new map, published in the journal *Science*, not only reveals canyons, eroded plains, and ancient alpine valleys, but also provides essential clues to understanding how ice responds to global warming.

In the current map, by applying the physical laws of glacial flow to extremely high-resolution satellite images, a continuous and coherent view of the bedrock is achieved, even in the most remote areas, surprising even the scientists themselves.

What previously appeared to be a uniform plain actually conceals a vast and dramatic subterranean architecture, formed over millions of years.

This map redefines how we predict the behavior of the ice sheet in the face of climate change.

Landforms directly influence how the ice moves, how it melts from below, or how it slides into the sea.

## "He ended the war on saturated fats": Robert Kennedy Jr. offers unusual praise for Trump



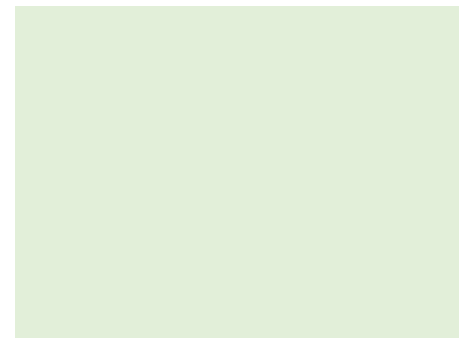
*RT, 01/14/2026*

**Synopsis:** U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. declared that President Donald Trump had ended the war on saturated fats.

Previously, the Secretary of Health and Human Services published new dietary guidelines that dramatically alter the traditional food pyramid we all know, emphasizing whole dairy, protein, and healthy fats.

At that time, he stated that the United States was now ending the so-called "war on saturated fats."

**N.R. The decline of our planet is advancing by leaps and bounds. Today it's the turn of saturated fats, responsible, according to all studies, for the increase in heart disease, strokes, diabetes, obesity, liver disease, cancer, etc.**



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## Latin America, after the US's departure from the climate "map"



DW, 01/22/2026

**Synopsis:** The withdrawal (and consequently, the loss of funding) by the US government from 66 international organizations—31 of them linked to the United Nations system—has caused concern in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Beyond funding, the United States is key to knowledge production and technical cooperation in science, climate crisis, biodiversity, and energy transition in the region.

This is linked to the dismantling of scientific entities whose purpose is to develop information on a country's environmental performance.

Javier Dávalos, Climate Policy Leader at The Climate Reality Project Latin America, warns of the scientific consequences. "It implies significant cuts to funding for global scientific reports and the loss of US scientists involved in review processes, climate modeling, and global scenarios that are fundamental for projections used by Latin American countries in environmental planning," he laments, adding that the region will have "less access to data, modeling, and climate technology transfers, and delays in regional impact assessments."

"The problem is that investments in science in Latin America have been very limited, particularly in climate science, but also in other sciences," says Sandra Guzmán, founder of the Climate Finance Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (GFCLAC).

**N.R. It is sad that it had to be this way for the region's almost total indifference to the climate situation to be exposed.**

**But, as every cloud has a silver lining, this is an excellent opportunity for our countries to begin paying their debt to research and scientific development.**

### Argentina bids farewell to 2025 with extreme heat across much of the country and a blackout in the capital



Últimas Noticias, 01/01/2026

**Synopsis:** High temperatures have been affecting the north and center of the country since last Monday, with readings reaching a high of 41 degrees Celsius on Tuesday in the city

of Santa Rosa, in the province of La Pampa (central Argentina).

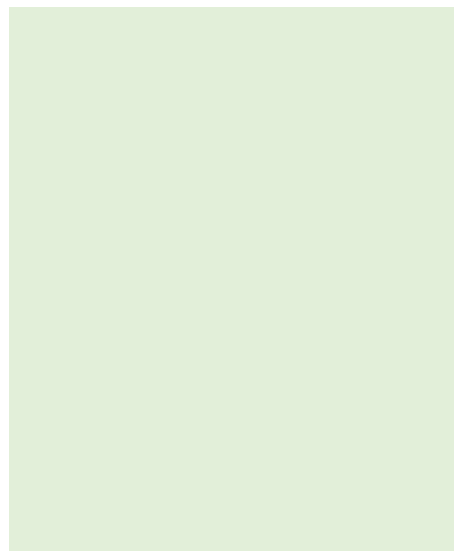
Higher temperatures are forecast, and the National Meteorological Service maintains an orange alert for the capital of Argentina and its urban area, as well as for the province of Entre Ríos (northeast), due to the moderate to high health risk.

Meanwhile, a yellow alert (low to moderate risk) is in effect for provinces in the central and northern parts of the country, and even for the southern province of Santa Cruz.

Authorities in several districts have asked the population to take extra precautions for their health due to the high temperatures.

In the Argentine capital, where emergency medical services had to assist 200 people suffering from heatstroke

on Tuesday, medical, fire, and Civil Defense teams have been reinforced to respond to any emergencies.



## Mercosur will allow the consumption of food containing pesticides banned in the EU



*El economista, 0116/2026*

**Synopsis:** Decades of negotiations for the EU and Mercosur to sign the free trade agreement between the two blocs have not resolved the most controversial points of the pact, such as the problems controlling the entry into the EU of food treated with chemicals banned in the EU.

Latin American negotiators have acknowledged problems with the "traceability" of the use that their farmers and ranchers make of fungicides, insecticides, antibiotics, and hormones banned in Europe.

At the center of the controversy are five types of chemicals, known by names such as Carbendazim, Glufosinate, Mancozeb, Benomyl, and Thiophanate-methyl, products very familiar to Latin American farmers, prohibited in the EU but not in the Americas.

In analyses conducted prior to the signing of the EU-Mercosur agreement, these products appear linked to all fruit exports from the American trade bloc—berries, pears, apples, citrus fruits, mangoes, papayas, and avocados.

Even more difficult to trace is the use of hormones banned by EU authorities, which are still widely used in the Southern Cone for fattening animals, especially pigs and cattle.

## Liquid air, the clean energy source that was ignored for almost 50 years and which will have its first commercial plant in the world in 2026



*BBC Future, 01/18/2026*

**Synopsis:** Power plants that burn fossil fuels like coal and gas can be switched on and off virtually at will, providing a predictable electricity supply that adjusts to demand. In contrast, renewable energy sources are intermittent.

This means that sometimes they don't generate enough electricity,

leading to the risk of blackouts, and other times there is a surplus—such as on very windy days—which could damage the grid.

An important part of the solution is to store surplus energy so it can be released when needed.

The main form of energy storage has been pumped-storage hydropower. Surplus electricity is used to pump water uphill, where it is stored behind a dam.

In 2021, the world had 160 gigawatts of pumped-storage hydropower capacity.

As the demand for energy storage has increased, large-scale battery storage systems have been built, growing from 1 GW in 2013 to over 85 GW in 2023, with more than 40 GW added in 2023 alone.

Energy storage using liquid air is a relatively new technology.

When the grid needs additional power, the liquefied air is used to drive turbines, generating electricity for the

grid. The air is then released back into the atmosphere.

Energy storage technologies are typically evaluated using an indicator called the "levelized cost of storage," which estimates the cost of each unit of energy stored over the project's lifetime.

In the case of liquid air, this cost can be as low as US\$45 per megawatt-hour, compared to US\$120 for pumped hydro storage and US\$175 for lithium-ion batteries.

The Manchester liquid air plant is the world's first commercial-scale initiative. It is expected to begin operating in 2027.

## Latin America and the United Nations crises



### Naciones Unidas

DW, 02/02/2026

**Synopsis:** Founded in 1945, the UN bases its operations on the lessons learned from the suffering and catastrophe of World War II.

The task of the new organization was to guarantee peace, based on principles such as collective security, international law and cooperation, the guarantee of human rights, and the joint fight against global threats.

Today, more than 80 years later, its capacity to act to stop conflicts or mass crimes is being questioned, and the UN is perceived as an overly expensive, cumbersome, and ineffective organization.

With the election of António Guterres' successor approaching, a new reorganization of the numerous organizations and programs that have emerged over the years will take place, in response to the membership's

demand to expand support and advisory work on new global issues.

In the case of Latin America, which is currently under increasing bilateral pressure from the US, a multilateral body could play an important role in creating a counterweight that would balance the scales and guarantee the autonomy achieved in recent decades.

Furthermore, many states and governments in the region depend on the advice and support of UN organizations and programs in various areas: economic, with ECLAC; political and institutional, with UNDP; migration, with IOM; and the fight against crime, with UNODC; or with peacekeeping missions, as in the case of Haiti.

The region remains vulnerable to natural disasters, threats to biodiversity, and its lag in the transition to more sustainable economies. However, once again, the ideological and political heterogeneity of Latin America is evident when it comes to finding common ground for action within the framework of the United Nations.

This limited capacity to act as a regional bloc also diminishes the weight of Latin America and the Caribbean in preventing the danger of the UN losing relevance in the face of major global challenges and acute political conflicts worldwide.

### Fires in Chile: Death toll rises to 21 and more than 20,000 affected



Laiguana.tv, 01/22/2026

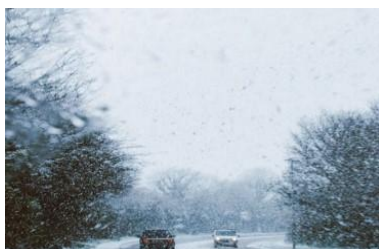
**Synopsis.** According to a new report released by authorities, the wildfires ravaging south-central Chile have so far left 21 dead, more than 20,000 people affected, and around 800 homes destroyed.

The South American nation received assistance from several countries, including Mexico, Argentina, Uru-

guay, the United States, Colombia, and Paraguay, to combat the wildfires.

There are 23 active fires in the country, located mainly in the Biobío, Ñuble, and La Araucanía regions.

### Winter storm and brutal cold in the US leave more than 30 dead and cause power outages



CNN, 01/27/2026

**Synopsis:** The winter storm in the United States and the subsequent

intense cold have left at least 30 people dead and caused prolonged power outages for hundreds of thousands.

Deaths related to the storm and the cold have been reported in Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

Some have been attributed to hypothermia, while others are related to shoveling snow, according to officials.

Ice from the storm has caused major power outages in the southern United States.

The extreme cold is breaking new records for daily minimum temperatures in the Great Plains.

More records are expected to be broken in the South and East as the cold continues.

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## Moscow faces historic snowfall not seen in 200 years



RT 01/29/2026

**Synopsis:** The Russian capital is facing a veritable climatic Armageddon, visible even from space. For the third consecutive day, heavy snowfall is battering Moscow and its surrounding areas.

Authorities are already reporting record monthly precipitation, with levels not seen in 200 years. The images speak for themselves.

## Red alert in southern Italy due to extreme weather phenomena



Prensa Latina, 01/21/2026

**Synopsis:** A red alert was issued in several areas of the Calabria, Sicily, and Sardinia regions in southwestern Italy due to Storm Harry, which has so far caused significant material damage, but no loss of life or injuries.

The increase in the frequency and intensity of these extreme weather events in Italy in recent years is linked to the rise in average global temperature, driven by the release of greenhouse gases into the Earth's atmosphere, according to experts from that institution.

There have been storm surges, waves up to ten meters high, torrential rains, and wind gusts exceeding 120 kilometers per hour.

In the Sicilian city of Catania, the sea, driven by strong storm gusts, flooded the streets, and numerous residents were evacuated by firefighters.

More than 1,650 firefighter interventions were carried out, including 1,013 in Sicily, 360 in Sardinia and 293 in Calabria, where 1,480 firefighters were deployed to respond to the emergency.

## 2025: Another year of record ocean temperatures



OMM, 01/14/2025

**Synopsis:** The average surface temperature of the oceans in 2025 was 1.44°C higher than the average for the period 1850-1900, according to an analysis by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

2025 closed as the third warmest year on record, despite the warming effect of La Niña, and only surpassed by 2023 and 2024, the warmest years to date.

American scientist John Abraham pointed out that "to know what is

happening with the climate, the answer lies in the ocean," since it is there that approximately 90% of the excess heat generated by global warming is stored, according to the WMO.

Therefore, ocean heat is a crucial indicator of climate change. Furthermore, a group of scientists led by Lijing Cheng of the Institute of Atmospheric Physics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in a study published in the academic journal *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences*, indicated that the global ocean heat content (OCC) in the upper 2,000 meters increased by approximately 23 zettajoules compared to 2024.

To put this into perspective, it corresponds to approximately 200 times the total global electricity generation in 2024.

"The main way the ocean continues to influence the climate is through the concomitant increase in water vapor in the atmosphere, which causes harmful increases in extremes in the hydrological cycle," noted Kevin Trenberth of the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research.

This water vapor, Trenberth reminded, is also a potent greenhouse gas, which in turn contributes to desiccation and the risk of Droughts and forest fires.

A warmer ocean, as Annalisa Bracco of the Georgia Institute of Technology (United States) pointed out, can also intensify hurricanes and torrential rains, while damaging the health of coastal marine areas and marine life, such as coral reefs, which suffered the worst bleaching on record in 2024.

## Disturbing forecast about the impact of plastic on health



*Diario El Universal, 01/27/2026*

**Synopsis:** A new study published in The Lancet reveals harm to human health at every stage of the plastics life cycle, warning that if the plastics system continues without changes in policies, economics, infrastructure, materials, or consumer behavior, the annual health impacts could more than double by 2040.

According to experts, 40% of the harm would be attributed to global warming from emissions, 32% to air pollution from production, and 27% to toxic chemicals released during the life cycle.

Emissions from primary plastic production are the main cause of the health effects, so reducing production would be the most effective measure.

The study concludes that "the current trajectory is not sustainable, but we have real and viable alternatives.

Global action is needed, focused on substantial and collective reductions in plastic production and the elimination of the use of hazardous chemicals [...] to protect people and the planet."

### 2025: The two sides of the environment in Latin America



*DW, 12/30/2025*

**Synopsis:** With temperatures nearing 40 degrees Celsius, several Latin American countries are bidding farewell to 2025 with a heat wave, a year that began with Donald Trump's return to the US presidency.

This event has shaped global environmental policies this year.

"The world has gone from being globalized to polarized, from commercial integration to commercial confrontation, and where the extreme right, which denies climate change and

opposes sustainable development goals, is growing in all regions," laments Manuel Pulgar Vidal, leader of the Global Climate and Energy Practice at WWF International, UN agency.

Chile, Colombia, and Brazil have shone on the international environmental agenda, hosting the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought last June, World Cities Day last October, and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in November, respectively.

Despite the failure of the latter, the upcoming international conference dedicated to phasing out fossil fuels, to be held in Colombia next April, keeps this issue pending.

Furthermore, in 2025, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights decided to recognize the climate crisis as a central human rights issue.

But, unfortunately, Latin America and the Caribbean will have to confront a "trend" that began this year: "The dismantling of Ministries of the Environment in many countries of the region," warns Pulgar-Vidal, recalling the cases of Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

"Unfortunately, the progress achieved at a COP can evaporate with a change of government," "The reduction of technical capacities, the closure of environmental programs, or the criminalization of environmental defenders remain an open wound in the region,"

Added to this is the extractive model. "Many countries in the region continue to rely on economies based on mining, hydrocarbons, or extensive agribusiness, sometimes even invoking the energy transition as justification," criticizes the UNEP consultant, who also acknowledges "the political collapse of the global agreement on plastics."

The decline in spaces of civic power, with the limitations on the actions of NGOs, is another issue that could continue in 2026, warns Pulgar.

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## University of Sciences in Venezuela bombed



*Laiguana.tv, 01/07/2026*

**Synopsis:** The Mathematics Center of the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research (IVIC), belonging to the Dr. Humberto Fernández-Morán National University of Sciences, was destroyed as a result of bombings carried out by US military forces on January 3rd, as denounced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yván Gil, who shared the information posted by the Minister of Popular Power for Science and Technology, Gabriela Jiménez, on his Telegram channel. The message details that the attack was total, causing material losses including computer equipment, as well as the

devastation of spaces such as the Physics, Chemistry, and Ecology centers, and the Nuclear Technology Unit.

"Two missiles directly impacted the area, leaving fragments that demonstrate imperial hatred against Venezuela's sovereign technological development (...) These spaces, now devastated by the bombing, have been fundamental in training the professionals who sustain our health, engineering, and oil sovereignty," the post states.

The message is also accompanied by a video showing the destruction caused by the imperialist attacks on this vital scientific and academic space.

### Back to the oil wars



*National Geographic, 01/10/2026*

**Synopsis:** The recent US attack on Venezuela has shaken international politics at the start of 2026.

But beyond the political and geostrategic consequences, the event has highlighted the extent to which we continue to depend on this fossil fuel in the era of decarbonization.

"We are going to extract a tremendous amount of wealth from the sub-

soil," Trump declared to reporters while celebrating Maduro's capture, alluding to the announced projects to exploit Venezuela's vast oil reserves.

According to the Oil & Gas Journal, Caracas has approximately 303 billion barrels, Saudi Arabia about 267 billion, and Canada, the United States, and Russia, with 159 billion, 81 billion, and 80 billion barrels, respectively.

Venezuelan reserves are clearly underutilized. The country barely reaches one million barrels per day, far from the record of 3.7 million it harvested in 1997.

In this context, the United States wouldn't have it so easy to acquire Venezuelan crude.

At least, the benefit wouldn't be so direct, given that it would first have to get to work making the deposit profitable. But does the United States

really have a crude oil deficit? Let's look at the data.

With fracking, the United States has become the world's leading oil-producing power.

But on the other hand, all European countries, as well as Mexico and Australia, have opted for a clear decrease in crude oil production for almost a decade.

The vast majority of G20 countries have decreased production, albeit very moderately, with the exception of the United States, China, and Russia, three countries that account for more than 80% of global demand.

Is that enough to justify intervening in Venezuela?

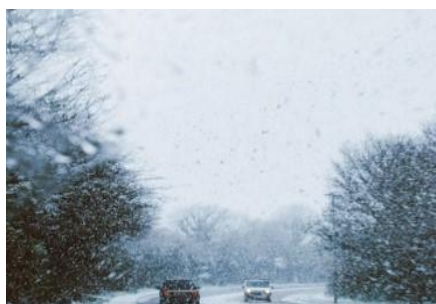
Regardless of its political function, reality shows us that oil continues to have a geopolitical value that goes beyond its real value... and beyond the health of the planet.

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**N.R.** It is sad and worrying to see how this prestigious publication views wars over oil as logical and normal. What hope is there for the rest of us?

## What is the polar vortex, the main trigger of the biggest snowstorm in the United States in decades?



BBC News Mundo, 01/27/2026

**Synopsis:** The powerful winter storm that battered large areas of the United States, from Texas to New England, brought heavy snowfall to areas where this phenomenon is unusual.

The monstrous storm can be explained by several reasons, but one of them, according to meteorologists and experts, is certain variations in the polar vortex.

Polar vortices are present at both of Earth's poles and refer to masses of cold, low-pressure air located in the troposphere (the layer of the atmosphere up to 12 km in altitude) and the stratosphere (between 12 and 50 km in altitude), which rotate at different speeds counterclockwise over the North and South Poles. Thanks to them, cold, dense air is maintained over the poles.

The vortices become stronger and larger in winter and weaken during summer.

For various reasons, these currents can deviate from their normal path.

Climatic factors cause the cold air "trapped" by the polar vortex to be suddenly released and descend to the

lower layers of the atmosphere, causing havoc.

One is the intrusion of warmer air masses that can destabilize the vortex and send Arctic air south.

Upon encountering warmer air in the south, the air rises and storm fronts form, which can alter usual weather conditions, generating sharp drops in temperatures.

Some experts maintain that climate change could influence the behavior of the North Pole vortex due to variations in sea surface temperatures and the Arctic region.

Others assert that there is insufficient information to attribute the variations in these cold air masses to this factor.

## Toxic cereals in the EU: eternal chemicals for breakfast



DW, 01/08/2026

**Synopsis:** A report by PAN Europe states that TFA, a dangerous chemical linked to health risks, has been detected in cereal samples from 16 EU countries.

To this end, 66 cereal products from 16 European countries were analyzed: 54 samples had high levels of trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), a substance that dissolves in water, spreading through rain and wastewater, and posing a health threat.

TFA belongs to the PFAS group, a group of more than 10,000 chemicals produced in the automotive, paper, metallurgical, chemical, and plastics industries, and is also found in various pesticides and refrigerants for cooling systems.

Their residues are found almost everywhere in nature, permanently contaminating water, soil, air, and food, to the point that almost everyone has PFAS in their blood, which can damage the immune system, cause diabetes, reduce fertility, and affect the development of newborns.

They are also suspected of causing cancer.

In the most recent study, wheat was contaminated with TFAs at levels over 100 times higher than tap water. TFA contamination has been detected in conventionally grown cereals at more than twice the levels found in organic products.

## Petrobras suspends drilling in the Foz do Amazonas basin after fluid leak



Folha de S. Paulo, 01/07/2026

**Synopsis:** Drilling in Block 59 in the Foz do Amazonas basin experienced a leak, and oil exploration activities in the area were temporarily suspended by Petrobras.

The government authorized drilling of the well in Foz do Amazonas in October 2025, after years of disputes surrounding the license.

The regulation creates new types of licenses, accelerates processes for strategic projects, expands self-licensing, and restricts consultation with Indigenous and Quilombola communities.

## How climate change threatens our rights



*Mundo de mujeres.mx, 12/21/2025*

**Synopsis:** Environmental scientist Joyeeta Gupta explains how climate change is affecting the human rights of millions of people and highlights the need to attribute its effects and be able to demand action, including in the courts.

It is becoming increasingly clear that climate change is not only an ecological collapse but also a human rights crisis.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, posed a question to the Human Rights Council: "Are we taking the necessary steps to protect people from climate chaos, safeguard their future, and manage natural resources in a way that respects human rights and the environment?"

His answer was very simple: we are not doing enough.

Professor Gupta stated that one of the shortcomings of the 1992 climate convention is that it never quantified the human damage.

And when the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, the global consensus focused on limiting warming to 2°C, later acknowledging that 1.5°C was a safer target.

For small island states, even that 1.5°C, which they accepted due to the power imbalance, is too close to 2°C.

### ANUR: Floods in Mozambique cause a crisis of 400,000 displaced people



*Aporrea.org, 01/30/2026*

**Synopsis:** Floods caused by heavy rains over the past two weeks have displaced 400,000 people in Mozambique. More than 1,500 kilometers of roads have been rendered "completely unusable," and UN planes, helicopters, and amphibious vehicles have been needed to reach those affected.

This is the third major flood they have suffered in 15 years, and on each occasion, they have lost cell phone

coverage, and their homes, belongings, livelihoods, and farmland have been severely damaged.

According to the Mozambican government (INGD), at least 146 people have died and nearly 821,000 have been affected by the floods caused by heavy rains in the country since last October.

### Why is there still so much plastic?



*DW, 01/02/2026*

**Synopsis:** The European Union officially banned and phased out single-use plastics in 2021 due to their toxicity. However, plastic straws, cutlery, and containers remain on shelves across Europe.

Plastic can release harmful chemicals and microparticles that enter the environment and humans, potentially

increasing the risk of serious illnesses such as cancer and infertility.

Despite the ban, nearly 70% of takeaway restaurants surveyed in Berlin still offer banned plastic items, according to a poll by the NGO Environmental Action Germany (DUH).

More than 400 million metric tons of plastic are produced each year—about 50 kilos per person. With production on the rise and largely ineffective global regulations, researchers warn that the situation will only worsen.

One theory attributes the persistence of single-use plastics after the EU ban to surpluses accumulated during the pandemic. At the peak of the 2020 lockdowns, takeout orders skyrocketed as restaurants closed or people avoided eating out.

But experts like Britta Schautz say the most likely cause is noncompliance by retailers and food businesses due to higher costs.

Other countries have gone further. Kenya banned plastic bags in 2017 with fines of up to \$31,000—or up to four years in prison. Worldwide, at

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least 90 countries have introduced some form of plastic ban.

A 2025 study in the United States—where some states even veto any legislation on plastics—concluded that broad bans, at the national or regional level, are the most effective.

## US orders Spain to keep coal-fired power plants banned because they "save lives"



*El Liberal, 12/29/2025*

**Synopsis:** The U.S. Department of Energy issued an emergency order to keep coal-fired power plants in Indiana open.

The Secretary of Energy stressed the need for access to "affordable, reliable, and safe electricity heading into winter" and criticized the use of renewable energy sources in such situations.

U.S. President Donald Trump, correcting a child's response, stated that "coal is clean and precious," and Secretary Wright, in a report, stated: "The United States cannot afford to continue down the unstable and dangerous path of energy depletion pursued by previous leaders, forcing the closure of baseload energy sources such as coal and natural gas."

"In the coming years, America's reindustrialization and the race for artificial intelligence will require a significantly greater supply of constant, reliable, and uninterrupted energy, supporting all forms of energy that are affordable, reliable, and safe." The International Energy Agency (IEA) has stated in a study that coal "is the

largest single source of carbon dioxide emissions globally."

## Venezuela: In 2026 we will boost the production of gold, iron, bauxite and coal in the country



*La iguana tv, 01/20/2026*

**Synopsis:** Venezuela's interim president, Delcy Rodríguez, announced via her Telegram channel that gold production will increase by 30%, and that the development of strategic resources such as iron, bauxite, coal, cassiterite, and other minerals has also been promoted, all with environmental responsibility and sustainability.

She also announced that she has sent a bill to the National Assembly regarding mines and minerals, which would allow for revenue from international investors, in partnership with national companies.

**R.N.: Venezuela is going against the grain of what the world's most reputable scientific studies have recommended: reducing coal production, the most polluting fossil fuel.**

## Not so much, not so soon: Greenland is not yet the gold and rare earth mine that Trump longs for.



*El confidencial, 01/23/2026*

**Synopsis:** A scientific analysis published in the journal *Geology* indicates that a key structural weakness can be identified beneath the Greenland ice sheet, explaining why part of the ice sheet is losing stability more rapidly than predicted, with a direct impact on sea level rise.

Far from resting uniformly on solid rock, extensive areas of the Greenland ice sheet rest on soft, water-saturated sediments. These layers, which can reach up to 200 meters in thickness, reduce friction at the base of the glacier and facilitate its movement toward the ocean, increasing the discharge of sea ice, with global consequences for the most vulnerable coastal regions.

Understanding the nature of the glacial base is key to improving predictions about sea level rise. Assuming a uniform rock base can lead to underestimating the speed of ice response to warming, while identifying areas with deformable sediments allows for adjusting models and better anticipating their environmental impact.

## A new marine protection treaty comes into force



IPS, 01/16/2026

**Synopsis:** The international agreement to protect marine life in international waters and the seabed, known as the High Seas Treaty, will enter into force on January 17, after two decades of initiatives and debates promoted by the world organization to adopt a legally binding treaty.

"As we face the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, this agreement is a lifeline

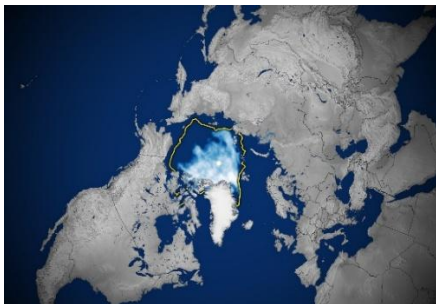
for the ocean and humanity," said UN Secretary-General Guterres.

So far, 84 countries have signed it, but Australia, the United States, India, the United Kingdom, and Russia, as well as some countries in our region, among others, have not yet ratified it.

Biodiversity in the High Seas is affected by the impact of human activity: destructive fishing practices—bottom trawling—and illegal fishing, pollution from plastics and chemicals, noise, maritime transport, and seabed mining, as well as ocean acidification and warming due to climate change. It is a legally binding ocean instrument that envisions inclusive ocean governance and is designed to transform the "high seas" and the international seabed into an environment that is managed sustainably for the benefit of all humanity, not just states or corporations with the capacity and resources to exploit those resources.

**N.R. However, it has crucial gaps that need to be addressed, such as the lack of regulations for deep-sea mining (a major source of marine pollution and destruction), and it will not, on its own, prevent the start of deep-sea mining in the ocean. Therefore, continued pressure is needed to achieve this.**

### The Arctic is approaching a critical point: record melting, "rusty" rivers, and a tundra turning green.



Noticias ONU, 12/18/2025

**Synopsis:** Climate change is making the Arctic unrecognizable. According to the Arctic Report Card 2025, a report endorsed by 112 scientists from 13 countries, the Arctic is war-

ming at a breakneck pace, transforming its icy landscape into a warmer, wetter, and more unpredictable environment, negatively impacting the entire planet.

The report documents historic ice losses. The glaciers of the Scandinavian Arctic and Svalbard suffered the largest net annual ice loss ever recorded between 2023 and 2024.

The Greenland Ice Sheet lost 129 billion tons of ice in 2025, confirming a long-term trend of net loss.

In Alaska, glaciers have lost an average of 38 meters of vertical thickness since the mid-20th century. This glacial retreat remains a key driver of sea level rise, with impacts including increased risk of flooding, landslides, and tsunamis affecting people, infrastructure, and coastlines.

The report highlights an apparent paradox: snow accumulation is greater in winter, while from June onward, due to the heat, the extent of snow cover fell below normal values.

Approximately half of what was recorded six decades ago, a clear sign of a structural change in the Arctic climate system.

The "greening of the Arctic" has far-reaching effects on ecosystems, permafrost conditions, and the livelihoods of Arctic populations, as well as influencing the global carbon cycle and the planet's climate.

"Record heat, historic lows in sea ice, retreating glaciers, continued ocean warming, and unprecedented extreme events are redefining this region," the report states.

# SYNOPSIS OF MEDIA HEADLINES

January 2026

The final warning is unequivocal: what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic.

Changes in the fastest-warming region on the planet are already influencing the global climate system, the oceans, and environmental stability worldwide.

## Milei's budget cuts are suffocating firefighters battling the blazes in Patagonia



Euronews, 02/04/2026

**Synopsis:** Drought and wildfires have ravaged 45,000 hectares in Argentine

Patagonia, while Javier Milei's government has cut fire management funding by 71% for 2026.

Firefighters denounce the lack of resources in the fight to save Los Alerces National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to trees up to 2,600 years old, where fires are burning out of control.

These wildfires are among the worst to hit drought-stricken Patagonia in decades and have forced the evacuation of thousands of residents and tourists.

The crisis, with most of Argentina's fire season still ahead, has reignited anger against Radical Libertarian President Javier Milei, whose harsh austerity campaign over the past two years has slashed spending on programs and agencies that not only fight fires but also protect parks and prevent fires from starting and spreading.

In 2024, he cut the budget of the

National Fire Management Service by 80% compared to the previous year, leaving the agency responsible for deploying brigades, maintaining water-bomber aircraft, purchasing additional equipment, and monitoring risks virtually empty.

These cuts come at a time when climate change is making extreme weather events more frequent and severe, increasing the risk of wildfires.

Fires like these also fuel a worrying vicious cycle, as they release greenhouse gas emissions that exacerbate hot and dry conditions, while degrading soils and destroying trees essential for carbon sequestration, which helps cool the planet.