



PRESS RELEASE

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Water ‘Vital to Human Survival, Economic Development, Prosperity of Every Nation’, Says Secretary-General in Message for World Day Observance

Following is UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ message for World Water Day, observed on 22 March:

Water is the lifeblood of our world. From health and nutrition to education and infrastructure, water is vital to every aspect of human survival and well-being, and the economic development and prosperity of every nation.

But drop by drop, this precious lifeblood is being poisoned by pollution and drained by vampiric overuse, with water demand expected to exceed supply by 40 per cent by decade’s end.

Meanwhile, climate change is wreaking havoc on water’s natural cycle. Greenhouse gas pollution continues to rise to all-time record levels, heating the world’s climate to dangerous levels. This is worsening water-related disasters, disease outbreaks, water shortages and droughts, while inflicting damage to infrastructure, food production and supply chains.

The theme of this year’s World Water Day reminds us of the cost of these failures on the billions of people who lack access to safe water and sanitation.

Out of every 100 people on Earth, 25 fetch all their water from open streams and ponds — or pay high prices to buy water of dubious safety. Twenty-two relieve themselves outdoors or use dirty, dangerous or broken latrines. And 44 see their wastewater flow back into nature untreated, with disastrous health and environmental consequences. In short, our world is dramatically — and dangerously — off track to reaching our goal of safely managed water and sanitation for all by 2030.

This year’s World Water Day reminds us of our individual and collective roles to protect and sustainably use and manage humanity’s lifeblood for present and future generations.

The United Nations Water Conference, which kicks off today, is a critical moment for national Governments, local and regional authorities, businesses, scientists, youth, civil society organizations and communities to join forces, and co-design and invest in solutions to achieve clean water and sanitation for all.

Meanwhile, Governments, businesses and investors must take much bolder actions to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C, with the G20 leading the way. We must break our addiction to fossil fuels and embrace renewable energy, while supporting developing countries every step of the way.

We don’t have a moment to lose. Let’s make 2023 a year of transformation and investment for humanity’s lifeblood. Let’s take action to protect, sustainably manage and ensure equitable access to water for all.

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