

WORLD WATER DAY – 2020

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY



2020 Water and climate change

This year celebration of World Water Day is about how climate change is related to water resources. If we want to preserve the quality in the context of sustainable development, we must take action now. We cannot afford to postpone this matter the future generations. Thus, the United Nations Organization has chosen for this year event a phrase that speaks by itself: *Water and climate change*.

The sixth goal of 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is about how we can all access clean water and sanitation. The present context of world economy is under pressure due to a possible pandemia. Poor infrastructure of water supply or low to none investments in water sector can generate water scarcity, poor quality and inadequate sanitation for millions of people.

To better understand what are the measures that can be take in order to cope with climate change issues we must find answers to several questions: can climate change policy makers put water in the “heart” of their plans, or are there enough solutions to have affordable water and sanitation?

In the UN-Water report, issued in September 2019, there are several key messages that are related to this year logo. Thus, climate change is responsible for an increase of variability in the water cycle, thus inducing extreme weather events, decreasing water quality and threatening sustainable development and biodiversity. The human population growth and the expansion of economy will increase the demand for water, the need for energy-intensive water pumping, transportation and treatment. This increasing demand must be mitigated by several key decisions like adopting climate-smart agricultural techniques and increasing the safe reuse of wastewater.

The world and regional climate policy and planning must take an integrated approach to climate change and water management. The action plans to tackle climate change need to be integrated across different sectors and coordinated across borders. And they must have one thing in common: safe and sustainable water management.

Many of us think that managing climate change is not our duty. It’s a government issue or of some international organization. In fact, we can do small steps to mitigate climate change by taken simple measures that involves water. The easiest one is *don’t waste water*. On a world scale, there are hundreds of thousands of actions gathered under the Act Now call of United Nations. This campaign is a critical part of the UN’s coordinated effort to raise awareness, ambition, and action for climate change and accelerate implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement. For individuals, some of the daily action or measure we can take

is to reduce our carbon footprints by: traveling more sustainably, saving energy or eating less meat.

Among the actions in place for climate change mitigation are those related to climate-smart urbanization. Thus, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has led the development of a law and climate change toolkit which aims to provide a global resource to help countries put in place the legal frameworks necessary for effective domestic implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

On the current projections, it is estimated that by 2050, population growth will increase the demand for water by 55% which will cause great pressure on natural water systems. The future of this resource and humanity depends on finding effective and sustainable solutions for its management and equitable distribution, and achieving this goal depends in large part on adequate practices for water use.

As presented in the SWA (Sanitation and Water for All) briefing papers “the water and sanitation sector are already affected in many different ways by weather and climate-related phenomena such as variability, seasonality and extreme weather events. These often negatively impact the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of water and sanitation. Climate change puts additional stress on achieving public health targets. For example, if there is a decline in the availability of water supplies (e.g. due to lowering of water levels), people may be forced to drink contaminated water (e.g. untreated surface water), leading to an increase in waterborne diseases. The pollution of wells and flooding of latrines also increases the risk of a higher incidence of infectious diseases”.

A higher incidence of extreme weather events can generate an additional stress to the sustainability of both sanitation and hygiene practices. All of these impacts call for necessary climate adaptation approaches, which in most cases result in higher costs for delivering and maintaining climate resilient services.

Adapting to the water effects of climate change will protect health and save lives. Using water more efficiently will reduce greenhouse gases and will mitigate climate change. We cannot afford to wait. **Everyone has a role to play.**

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