

WORLD WATER DAY – 2023

ACCELERATING CHANGE



This year celebration of World Water Day is related to the actions needed to be implemented in order to accelerate the changes we must make in order to cope with water crisis and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals no. 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation by 2030.

The sixth goal of 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is about how we can all access clean water and sanitation, preserve our health and use water wisely.

Today, world community notes with concern that we are far from achieving this goal. Billions of people and communities cannot develop and live healthy, because the rights of all who need to have access to water and sanitation are not yet fulfilled. The new agenda, underlines the actions and commitment needed to be done, to properly manage our daily water from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. Stronger measures and actions must be undertaken by governments, businesses, organizations, institutions and associations involved in water policies. Next week, at the UN Water Conference in New York on 22-24 March 2023 these commitments will constitute the base of the new Water Action Agenda.

United Nations presents the global water and sanitation crisis and emphasizes that:

- In recent decades, almost half of the wetlands around communities have disappeared, which will increase the risk of floods;
- Agriculture and industry is consuming more than over 80% of the available water;
- Due to climate change, drought would increasingly affect water resources availability and food supplies. Flooding would endanger water and sanitation facilities, contaminating water resources;
- The poorest and most vulnerable members of world population, disproportionately affected by the crisis, would have the hardest fight to get authorities to improve their water and sanitation services.

The human population growth and the constant acceleration for more and more clean water will increase the demand for this resource, 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.

This year general theme "Accelerating change!" is complemented by a more detailed one: "Make the change you would like to see in the world! Every drop or gesture counts!".

In fact, we can do small steps to mitigate climate change by taken simple measures that involves water:

- Save water: Take shorter showers and don't let the tap run when brushing my teeth, doing dishes and preparing food.

- Stop polluting: Don't put food waste, oils, medicines and chemicals down my toilet or drains.
- Eat local: Buy local, seasonal food and look for products made with less water.
- Protect nature: Plant a tree or create a raingarden – use natural solutions to reduce the risk of flooding and store water.
- Clean up: Take part in clean-ups of my local rivers, lakes, wetlands or beaches.
- Travel more sustainably and save energy.

This year logo picture associated with WWD starts from an old story of the Quechua people of Peru about a hummingbird which is trying to put out a huge forest fire by carrying a few drops of water in its beak. When she is asked how she thinks she can put out the fire in the forest, she answers: "I do my part. Every drop counts!". The campaign launched by Un-Water thus encourages people to be like the hummingbird, that is, to do everything in their power to help solve the water and sanitation crisis.

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”.

Changes in water use, the new demands determined by an increase population, challenges generated by climate change, the actions needed to reach the sixth UN SDG 2030 Agenda are the main topics which will be covered by the new Water Action Agenda.

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD

Răzvan BĂȚINAȘ, PhD. Lecturer