

WORLD WATER DAY – 2024



WATER FOR PEACE

This year celebration of World Water Day is related to the strong connections between water resources and peace concept. Unfortunately, worldwide, along the human history water was used to start wars and conflicts. António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, emphasizes that water can either create peace or spark conflict. When water is scarce or polluted, tensions rise. But by cooperating on water, we can balance everyone’s needs and help stabilize the world. Prosperity and peace rely on water. Let’s commit to making water a force for cooperation, harmony, and stability, creating a world of peace and prosperity for all humankind.

Our focus on this day is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 6: ensuring water and sanitation for all by 2030. Water isn’t just a resource; it’s a bridge that connects all living beings on our planet. It touches every aspect of our lives, from maternal and child health to women’s empowerment, food security, sustainable development, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Water scarcity and disputes over water resources have historically led to conflicts and tensions between nations and communities. Here are some notable examples of wars and conflicts related to water: dispute along the countries situated in Nile River basin (Egypt - Ethiopia), the ones in Gange River catchment (India-Bangladesh), for harnessing the power of waters to produce energy trough hydroelectric power plants and associated dams. The present conflict from Eastern Europe has involved water as a weapon or a tool to generate casualties by destroying dams, water treatment facilities, hydropower plants, sewage treatment plant, cutting off the pipeline water network, damaging water reservoirs. Since the beginning of war *25 different events* involving water have been recorded.

The uneven access of freshwater resources worldwide distribution can generate disparities and can lead to social unrest, especially when combined with food insecurity, high unemployment, and internal migration. Another threat is determined by lack of cooperation on shared water resources between countries which can poses risks to water quality and quantity.

So, some of the basic ways on how to harness water for peace are:

- Encourage neighboring countries to collaborate on shared water resources. Joint management of rivers, lakes, and aquifers can foster trust and prevent disputes.
- Establish basin-level agreements that outline water allocation, usage, and environmental protection across borders.

- Promote dialogue and negotiation among stakeholders, including governments, communities, and organizations.
- Use water as a common ground for cooperation, emphasizing its role in sustainable development and human well-being.
- Invest in water infrastructure that benefits all parties. Shared dams, pipelines, and treatment plants can enhance water availability.
- Ensure equitable access to safe water for all communities, regardless of political boundaries.
- Collaborate on ecosystem restoration and conservation. Healthy watersheds contribute to stability and resilience.
- Address pollution and climate change collectively, recognizing their impact on water availability and quality.
- Engage in hydro-diplomacy by appointing water ambassadors or mediators. Their role is to facilitate negotiations and resolve disputes.
- Use water-related forums and conferences to build relationships and find common ground.
- Educate communities about the importance of water for peace and development.
- Raise awareness about water scarcity, pollution, and their implications for regional stability.

Remember, water knows no borders. By viewing it as a shared resource rather than a source of conflict, we can pave the way for a more harmonious and peaceful world.

Into a challenging world we must rely on each other to cope with water related issues! As the ripple effects made by a stone thrown into the water, we can cooperate on water by: fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges. We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life.

This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.

STOP WARS AND DRINK WATER!

Răzvan BĂȚINAȘ, PhD. Lecturer