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Water touches every aspect of development and it links with nearly every Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). It drives economic growth, supports healthy ecosystems, and is essential and fundamental for life itself

Some 2.2 billion people around the world do not have safely managed drinking water services; 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services, and 3 billion lack basic handwashing facilities. Gaps in access to water supply and sanitation, growing populations, more water-intensive patterns of growth, increasing rainfall variability, and pollution are combining in many places to make water one of the greatest risks to economic progress, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The consequences of such stress are local, national, trans boundary, regional, and global in today's interconnected and rapidly changing world. Consequences will be disproportionately felt by the poorest and most vulnerable

Safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services are an essential part of preventing and protecting human health during infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 pandemic. According to a WHO/UNICEF technical brief on WASH and waste management for COVID-19

Frequent and proper hand hygiene is one of the most important measures that can be used to prevent infection with the COVID-19 virus. WASH services should enable more frequent and regular hand hygiene by improving facilities and using proven behavior change techniques

WHO guidance on the safe management of drinking water and sanitation services applies to the COVID-19 outbreak. Measures that go above and beyond these recommendations are not needed

Many co-benefits will be realized by safely managing WASH services and applying good hygiene practices. Such efforts will prevent other infectious diseases, which cause millions of deaths each year

Climate change expresses itself through water. 9 out of 10 natural disasters are water-related. Water-related climate risks cascade through food, energy, urban and environmental systems. If we are to achieve climate and development goals, water must be at the core of adaptation strategies

To guide effective climate change adaptation, activities should reflect the importance of water management for reducing vulnerability and building climate resilience, prioritizing the following actions: Expand beyond traditional integrated water resources management (IWRM). Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions also depend on access to reliable water resources, as all mitigation actions need water to succeed

Promote investment and solutions that incorporate management of **'natural infrastructure'** – the ecosystem services provided by healthy watersheds and coasts – and their benefits for climate-resilient development of the food and energy sectors.

Support actions at scale to build climate resilience by combining watershed management, sustainable infrastructure, and empowerment and learning through adaptive institutions.

Economic growth is a ‘thirsty business.’ Water is a vital factor of production, so diminishing water supplies translates into slower growth. Some regions could see their growth rates decline by as much as 6 percent of GDP by 2050 as a result of water-related losses in agriculture, health, income and prosperity. Ensuring a sufficient and constant supply of water under increasing scarcity is essential to achieving global poverty alleviation goals.

Optimizing the use of water through better planning and incentives will help to improve welfare and increase economic growth. Economic instruments such as water permits and prices, if well implemented and enforced, can improve stewardship of water resources.

Expanding water supply and availability where and if appropriate is vital. This includes investments in water storage, water reuse and recycling and, where viable, desalinization. These interventions must be accompanied by policies to promote water efficiency and improve water allocation.

“Water proofing” economies to limit the impact of extremes and uncertainties is also among the top priorities. Better urban planning, expanding crop insurance to protect farmers, and citizen engagement will build resilience and minimize economic impacts of adverse events.

Water is crucial in determining whether the world will achieve the SDGs. The world needs a fundamental shift in how it **understands, values and manages water**.

Understanding Water means making evidence-based decisions about water using strengthened water data.

Valuing Water means recognizing the values that society’s accord to water and its uses, taking these into account in political and business decisions including decisions about appropriately pricing water and sanitation services.

Manage Water means pursuing integrated approaches to water resource management across local, national, and regional levels.

Smart investments in clean water and sanitation prevent needless deaths and transform lives. Healthier children become healthier adults who contribute more to the economy. This principle is at the core of the World Bank’s Human Capital Project.

Sanitation is critical to health, economic growth and the environment. Investing in sanitation is about preventing needless deaths, investing in people and transforming lives. 297,000 children under 5 years die due to diarrhea linked to inadequate WASH. Poor sanitation and contaminated water are also linked to transmission of diseases such as cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A, and typhoid.

Political commitment and leadership, technological innovations, and breakthroughs in service delivery and financing models are all needed to support governments to deliver on their commitment to SDG 6.2 – achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030.

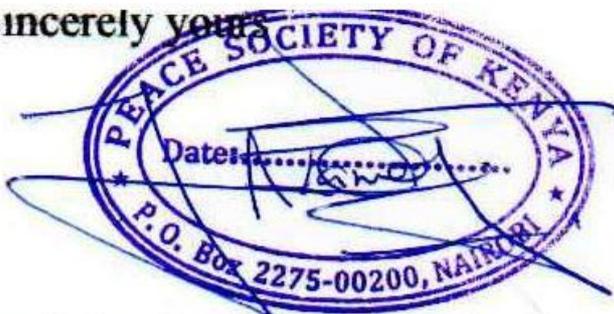
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