

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**OPENING REMARKS TO THE
UNITED NATIONS WATER CONFERENCE**

New York, 22 March 2023

Your Majesty, King Willem-Alexander,

President Emomali Rahmon,

I thank the Netherlands and Tajikistan for co-hosting, and the President of the General Assembly for his critical role.

Excellencies, dear friends,

Water is humanity's lifeblood.

From the food we eat.

To the ecosystems and biodiversity that enrich our world.

To the prosperity that sustains nations.

To the economic engines of agriculture, manufacturing and energy generation.

To our health, hygiene and survival itself.

Water is a human right — and a common development denominator to shape a better future.

But water is in deep trouble.

We are draining humanity's lifeblood through vampiric overconsumption and unsustainable use, and evaporating it through global heating.

We've broken the water cycle, destroyed ecosystems and contaminated groundwater.

Nearly three out of four natural disasters are linked to water.

One in four people lives without safely managed water services or clean drinking water.

Over 1.7 billion people lack basic sanitation.

Half a billion practice open defecation.

And millions of women and girls spend hours every day fetching water.

I see four key areas to accelerate results.

First — closing the water management gap.

Governments must develop and implement plans that ensure equitable water access for all people while conserving this precious resource.

I also call on countries to work together across borders to jointly manage water.

One of my proudest achievements as Prime Minister of Portugal was signing the Albufeira Convention on water management with Spain 25 years ago.

The Convention is still in force today.

We see similar initiatives in Bolivia and Peru and elsewhere.

And I urge all Member States to join and implement the UN Water Convention.

Second — massively investing in water and sanitation systems.

The proposed SDG Stimulus and reforms to the global financial architecture aim to increase investment in sustainable development.

International financial institutions should develop creative ways to extend financing and accelerate the re-allocation of Special Drawing Rights.

And Multilateral Development Banks should continue expanding their portfolios on water and sanitation to support countries in desperate need.

Troisièmement, il faut faire de la résilience une priorité.

Nous ne pouvons pas faire face à cette urgence du XXI^e siècle avec des infrastructures d'un autre âge.

Cela demande d'investir dans des canalisations, des infrastructures de distribution d'eau et des stations d'épuration qui soient résilientes face aux catastrophes.

Cela nécessite de nouveaux moyens de recycler et de conserver l'eau.

Cela implique des systèmes alimentaires intelligents, qui protègent le climat et la biodiversité en réduisant les émissions de méthane et la consommation d'eau.

Cela requiert d'investir dans un nouveau système d'information mondial qui permette de prévoir en temps réel les besoins en eau.

Cela signifie que chaque personne dans le monde bénéficie de dispositifs d'alerte rapide contre les phénomènes climatiques ou météorologiques dangereux.

Et cela nécessite d'envisager de nouveaux partenariats public-privé dans le cadre de nos activités.

Et quatrièmement, il faut lutter contre le changement climatique.

L'action climatique et un avenir durable de l'eau sont indissociables.

Nous ne devons ménager aucun effort pour limiter le réchauffement de la planète à 1,5 degré Celsius et répondre aux attentes des pays en développement en matière de justice climatique.

J'ai proposé au G20 un Pacte de solidarité climatique par lequel tous les grands émetteurs redoublent d'efforts pour réduire leurs émissions, et les pays les plus riches mobilisent des ressources financières et techniques pour soutenir la transition des économies émergentes.

En début de semaine, j'ai présenté un plan visant à intensifier les efforts pour parvenir à ce Pacte de solidarité climatique, grâce à un programme d'Accélération et la pleine mobilisation de tous.

Nous n'avons pas une minute à perdre.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This is more than a conference on water.

It is a conference on today's world seen from the perspective of its most important resource.

This conference must represent a quantum leap in the capacity of Member States and the international community to recognize and act upon the vital importance of water to our world's sustainability and as a tool to foster peace and international co-operation.

From water as a key driver across economies and policy making...

To the recognition of water and sanitation as a human right.

From the integration of water and climate policies...

To an innovative approach in the use of water in food production.

Now is the moment for game-changing commitments to bring the Water Action Agenda to life.