

The Planet Has Entered the Era of Global Water Bankruptcy

The world's water resources are in the red. This was the warning issued by the UN last December in the report "Global Water Bankruptcy," prepared by the Institute for Water, Environment, and Health at the United Nations University. Today, more than ever, this declaration highlights the importance of protecting forests and other ecosystems that are essential for safeguarding this precious resource.

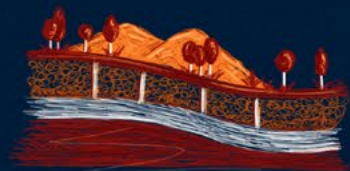
What is water bankruptcy?

It refers to the collapse of the world's water systems, which have reached a tipping point where it is practically impossible to restore them. This is the result of ecosystem degradation and the overexploitation of surface and groundwater, caused primarily by human activities.

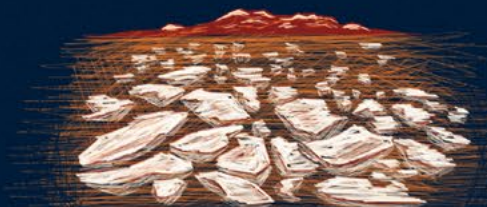
Main symptoms of 'water bankruptcy'



Rivers, lakes, and wetlands on the verge of disappearing
Surface water bodies—rivers, lakes, and wetlands—are shrinking at an unprecedented rate due to factors such as excessive increases in water withdrawals, altered flow rates, rising temperatures, and changes in land use.



Depletion of groundwater
Groundwater and aquifers constitute some of the world's primary water reserves. However, they are declining rapidly and are being depleted faster than they can be replenished, as a result of overexploitation, primarily for domestic use and irrigation.



Disappearance of the planet's ice
The melting of glaciers, ice sheets, and permafrost increases pressure on the world's water resources, as it critically affects natural water reserves. Furthermore, it alters the frequency and intensity of extreme events such as floods and landslides, as a result of melting.



Man-made droughts and chronic water scarcity
Today, more than 4 billion people face water shortages for at least one month a year. This deficit is due to climate change, but above all to overexploitation and the degradation of water quality caused by human activities such as industry and agriculture.



Degradation of water quality
Water scarcity is not only due to the reduction of water bodies, but also to the fact that much of the available water does not meet the quality standards required for human consumption, posing serious risks to human health and ecosystems. This is mainly due to the contamination of surface and groundwater with untreated wastewater, industrial waste, and chemicals used in agriculture.

4 billion
people face severe water shortages for at least one month a year.

1.8 billion
people lived in drought conditions in 2022-2023

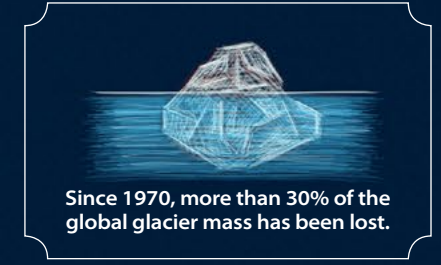
70%
of the planet's large groundwater reserves are gradually being depleted.

50%
of the world's major lakes have lost water since the early 1990s.

What are the consequences of global water "bankruptcy"?

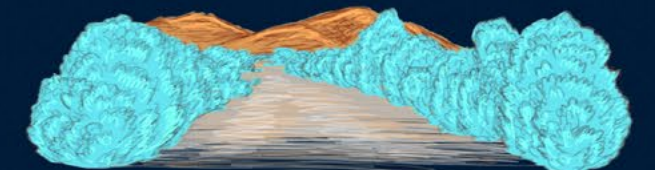


The imbalance between the ever-increasing demand for water and increasingly scarce available resources can rapidly lead to far-reaching effects such as food insecurity, energy system failures, threats to public health, loss of livelihoods for millions of people, loss of biodiversity, inequalities in access to water, displacement, and humanitarian conflicts.



Since 1970, more than 30% of the global glacier mass has been lost.

Healthy Forests, Hope for Water



According to UNESCO's Water for Prosperity and Peace report, around 75% of the world's accessible freshwater comes from forested watersheds. Forests play an essential role in the water cycle because they regulate the climate and rainfall patterns, contribute to the recharge of groundwater and aquifers, help purify water bodies, and prevent droughts and floods.