



KEY MESSAGES

UN-Water Policy Brief – Climate Change and Water

The global climate crisis is inextricably linked to water. Climate change increases variability in the water cycle, inducing extreme weather events, reducing the predictability of water availability, affecting water quality and threatening sustainable development, biodiversity and the enjoyment of the human rights to water and sanitation worldwide.

Growing demand for water increases the need for energy-intensive water pumping, transportation, and treatment, and has contributed to the degradation of critical water-dependent carbon sinks such as peatlands. And, some climate change mitigation measures, such as the expanded use of biofuels, can further exacerbate water scarcity.

National and regional climate policy and planning must take an integrated approach to climate change and water management. Increased water stress and meeting future demands will require increasingly tough decisions about how to allocate water resources among competing water uses, including for climate change mitigation and adaptation. If we are to create a sustainable future, business as usual is no longer an option and water management needs to be scrutinized through a climate resilience lens.

We need more investment in improved hydrological data, institutions and governance, education and capacity development, risk assessment and knowledge sharing. Policies need to ensure the representation, participation, behavioral change and accountability of all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. Adaptation plans need to incorporate targeted strategies that assist lower-income populations – those who are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts – to navigate new conditions.

