

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**FOREWORD TO FOURTH UNITED NATIONS
WORLD WATER DEVELOPMENT REPORT**
February 2012

Water links the local to the regional, and brings together global questions of food security, public health, urbanization and energy. Addressing how we use and manage water resources is central to setting the world on a more sustainable and equitable path.

Universal access to safe drinking water and water resources is an imperative that cuts across all internationally agreed development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals. Improving access to water improves health and education outcomes. It increases agricultural productivity. It is a force for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Yet pressures on freshwater are rising – from the expanding needs of agriculture, food production and energy consumption to pollution and the weaknesses of water management. Climate change is a real and growing threat. Without good planning and adaptation, hundreds of millions of people are at risk of hunger, disease, energy shortages and poverty.

This fourth edition of the World Water Development Report is the product of synergy within the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations World Water Assessment Programme hosted by UNESCO. It shines a spotlight on water use, analyzes the question of managing water under uncertainty, and addresses gender issues throughout. The result is a call to action – to strengthen mechanisms of global coordination, to improve national institutions and to weave the two levels more tightly together.

This report is also intended to contribute to the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. If Rio+20 is to succeed, it must renew political commitment to integrated approaches to the sustainable management of the world's freshwater resources. Just as water is central to every aspect of life on Earth, it must lie at the heart of the new vision we forge for sustainable development for the century ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ban Ki-moon".
BAN Ki-moon

Signed on 10/2
Foreword to WWD report
Drafter: DS
Proofread by: RF/5W
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