

FACT SHEET: Vice President Harris Announces Action Plan on Global Water Security and Highlights the Administration's Work to Build Drought Resilience

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The Historic Action Plan Elevates Water Security as Foreign Policy Priority

More than two billion people today lack access to safely managed drinking water, and nearly half the world's population lacks access to safely managed sanitation services. An accelerating climate crisis will increase pressure on water resources during this decade, and half the world's population is expected to face severe water stress by 2030. Water insecurity threatens lives and livelihoods and can lead to popular unrest and population movements. These conditions can undermine states and governments—particularly those that are already experiencing weak state capacity or legitimacy.

In response to this growing challenge, Vice President Harris is announcing the launch of the first-of-its-kind White House Action Plan on Global Water Security, which outlines an innovative approach to advancing water security at home and abroad. This plan identifies the direct links between water and U.S. national security, and it will harness the resources of the U.S. Government—from leveraging science and technology to informing our diplomacy, defense, and development efforts—to advance global water security and foreign policy goals. In addition to increasing gender equity and economic growth, water security is a central element of preventing conflict and promoting global peace and stability.

This announcement builds on the Biden-Harris Lead Pipe Action Plan and other historic steps the Biden-Harris Administration has already taken to improve water security at home, including investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to increase drought resilience, replace lead pipes, and invest in water infrastructure to deliver safe drinking water to families and children. The Drought Resilience Interagency Working Group, co-led by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, has worked to coordinate Drought Resilience funding across the Federal family to provide targeted support to drought-stricken communities and build American communities' resilience to worsening drought

conditions caused by climate change, as outlined in its one-year summary report. The Administration’s work at home will help mitigate the cost of inaction—in 2020 alone, wildfires caused by extreme drought resulted in \$16.6 billion in damages.

Today’s newly announced White House Action Plan on Global Security uses a broad definition of water security, emphasizing that having “water security” implies sustainable access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene services, as well as water to sustain ecosystems and for agriculture, energy, and other economic activities. As countries around the world face the growing threat of water insecurity, global progress toward meeting water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) goals has been modest; water systems are not always well managed, inhibiting sustainable, reliable service delivery.

In response, the Action Plan elevates water security as an essential element of the United States’ international efforts to achieve national security objectives that include increasing equity and economic growth; decreasing the risk of vulnerability to shocks, conflict and instability; building inclusive and resilient societies; bolstering health and food security; advancing gender equity and equality; and tackling climate change. This action plan will be operationalized through Federal departments’ and agencies’ contributions to the U.S. Global Water Strategy, mandated by the Congress in the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014.

The plan is organized around three pillars:

- 1. Advancing U.S. leadership in the global effort to achieve universal and equitable access to sustainable, climate-resilient, safe, and effectively managed WASH services without increasing greenhouse gas emissions.** Recognizing the immense progress needed to achieve global WASH goals, the plan emphasizes the importance of affordable and sustainable WASH services, locally led solutions, and addressing the inequity that results from water insecurity—particularly for women and girls.
- 2. Promoting sustainable management and protection of water resources and associated ecosystems to support economic growth, build resilience, mitigate the risk of instability or conflict, and increase cooperation.** The United States’ world-leading scientific and technical expertise will support efforts to use water resources efficiently and effectively to support agriculture and food security needs, health systems strengthening, and conflict prevention efforts. At the same time, this approach recognizes the importance of nature-based solutions, including drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge.

3. Ensuring that multilateral action mobilizes cooperation and promotes water security.

Efforts to promote water cooperation through regional and multilateral fora are essential to facilitating greater collaboration among countries that share water resources. Elevating water security across U.S. diplomatic efforts will mean integrating water into our development programming and infrastructure initiatives, including those the United States undertakes with international partners. We will identify opportunities where engagement around the management of water resources at all levels, from high-level to technical, can lead to stronger regional ties.

Through this Action Plan, the United States will highlight, reinforce, and where needed reorient existing U.S. Government tools to advance progress toward global water security goals. This process will champion the use of data in decision-making and break down barriers to collaboration across the U.S. Government. The United States will also increase its focus on working in partnership with nongovernmental organizations, local communities, and the private sector in order to maximize the impact of its programming and investments. This comprehensive, systems-based approach will recognize the unique challenges in each region and community and address them to ensure that water strengthens, rather than undermines, U.S. national security.

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