

Water for Peace: Building Cooperation in a Shared Future



Water is far more than a physical resource—it is the foundation of life, development, and stability. Across the world, more than 270 river basins and countless aquifers cross political borders, linking over 150 countries. These shared water resources connect people, economies, and ecosystems in ways that transcend geography or politics. When countries work together to manage them, water becomes a powerful instrument for peace. When they do not, scarcity and competition can lead to tension and conflict.



“Water for Peace” emphasizes cooperation instead of confrontation. It promotes dialogue, data-sharing, and the joint management of rivers, lakes, and groundwater systems. Successful examples—from the Senegal River Basin in West Africa to the Mekong River Commission in Southeast Asia—show that collaboration on water can foster trust even among politically divided neighbors. Shared monitoring systems, early-warning mechanisms, and equitable allocation frameworks turn water into a bridge for diplomacy rather than a barrier.

Climate change makes this cooperation more urgent. Droughts, floods, and pollution threaten water security everywhere, often hitting vulnerable communities hardest.

Ultimately, water for peace means water for life. It requires recognizing that access to clean and sufficient water is not a privilege but a shared human right and a foundation for sustainable development. Managing water wisely and collectively is humanity’s most practical path toward a peaceful and secure future.

In the 21st century, *Water for Peace* should guide global policies just as nuclear non-proliferation once did. Cooperative water management can ease refugee crises, promote food and energy security, and protect ecosystems. It can also form the backbone of regional integration and sustainable economic growth.

The message is clear: peace cannot exist without water security, and water security cannot exist without peace. By transforming shared rivers and aquifers into channels of dialogue and cooperation, humanity can convert one of its greatest challenges into a foundation for a more just, stable, and peaceful world.

Water for Peace’ means water for all

Dursun Yıldız -Director

A New Era in Central Asia:

Water-Energy Cooperation Strengthens Through the Toktogul Dam

Dursun Yıldız, Hydropolitics Expert— HPA Director October 16, 2025

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have agreed on a new set of protocols for the joint management of energy and water resources.

Signed in Kyrgyzstan on September 8, 2025, these documents reflect the three countries' commitment to maintaining the water-energy balance in the Syr Darya Basin. The protocols are based primarily on the principle of energy supply in exchange for water releases from the Toktogul Dam.



Toktogul Dam: The Region's Water-Energy Heart

Constructed on the Naryn River in 1976 during the USSR, the Toktogul Dam holds a strategic position in Central Asia's water-energy equation, with a water storage capacity of 19.5 billion m³ and an installed capacity of 1,200 MW.

The Naryn River is the most important source of the Syr Darya River, contributing 60-70% of the river's total flow. The majority of this water (85-90%) is used for agricultural irrigation in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The Naryn River originates in the Tian Shan Mountains, a large mountainous basin in eastern Kyrgyzstan, and flows westward before flowing into Uzbekistan and merging with the Black Sea to form the Syr Darya River.

From the USSR Era Balance to the New Era Agreements

During the USSR Era, Kyrgyzstan stored water for the irrigation needs of downstream countries during the summer months, while Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan supplied Kyrgyzstan with natural gas, coal, and oil during the winter months. However, after 1991, Kyrgyzstan, in an effort to increase its energy independence, began operating the Toktogul Dam for winter energy production.

This led to summer water shortages in the downstream region and created significant tensions between the countries.

The newly signed protocols aim to redress this imbalance. Under these protocols, Kyrgyzstan will release water for agricultural irrigation in the summer, while Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will provide Kyrgyzstan with electricity and natural gas during the winter months. This model creates a new balance based on interdependence in Central Asia's water-energy relations.

From the Tashkent Protocol to Regional Cooperation

The September protocols, which follow on from the agreements signed in Tashkent in May 2025, define how water allocation and energy sharing in the Syr Darya Basin will be conducted during the vegetation period. This framework includes the coordination of water release timing, energy supply, and environmental flows.

Hydropolitical Assessment

This agreement package signals a period in which water is once again emerging as a tool for cooperation in Central Asia. Joint dam operation protocols could contribute to regional stability by reducing intra-basin tensions. Kyrgyzstan secures winter energy, while downstream countries secure summer irrigation. The agreement demonstrates that regional water diplomacy is evolving as a political balancing act rather than a technical compromise. The joint planning of water storage and release regimes also emerges as a critical step for adapting to climate change in the region.

Conclusion

This new water-energy cooperation model, centered on the Toktogul Dam, stands out as the most comprehensive coordination effort in the Syr Darya Basin since the post-Soviet era.

If operated sustainably, this protocol package could mark the beginning of a new regional integration process extending from "water sharing to energy sharing." In this context, the new hydropolitics of the Syr Darya Basin will contribute significantly to the creation of a water-energy cooperation infrastructure that will reshape the region.

Ethiopia's Controversial Dam (GERD) Completed: What Happens Next?

Dursun Yıldız – Director, Hydropolitics Academy Center, Türkiye



In April 2011, Ethiopia began construction of Africa's largest hydroelectric dam, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), on the Blue Nile river. Ethiopia completed construction of the US\$4 billion-plus project in July 2025, mainly with funds sourced from Ethiopians at home and in the diaspora, with an official launch on 9 September 2025.

On September 9, 2025, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) was officially inaugurated. The completion of the dam marks a new phase in the upstream–downstream dynamics of the Nile Basin. For Ethiopia, GERD is more than electricity production: it is a symbol of economic development, regional power, and national unity

Egypt's Vulnerability and Collapse of Negotiations

Nearly 90% of its population lives along the Nile; more than 90% of its freshwater comes from the river. Under the 1959 Agreement, Egypt was allocated 55.5 bcm annually, yet its current needs are about 114 bcm. The absence of guaranteed releases during drought years is perceived as an existential threat. Ethiopia's Strategy: With a full capacity of 5,150 MW, GERD will double the country's power generation. Through electricity exports to Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, and Djibouti, Ethiopia seeks to expand its regional influence. Talks since 2010 have failed. Ethiopia rejected the 2020 Washington draft agreement that included minimum release rules. The U.S. has lost credibility as a neutral mediator.

Negotiations have failed. How will the dam be operated ?

Negotiations conducted by the African Union, the EU, and the US over the past 10 years have failed to yield results. A critical crisis in this regard has been how the dam will be operated during droughts. A draft draft prepared in Washington in 2020 during the negotiations included minimum water release rates. This proposal, accepted by Egypt and Sudan, was rejected by the latter. The draft was argued to be "too restrictive." Cairo, however, insisted on a "fair balance." This failure led to erosion of trust in subsequent negotiations. In 2023, Egypt declared the negotiation process "impassed," and in 2025, US President Donald Trump's statement that "the dam was built largely with US money" sparked outrage in Ethiopia. This situation led to the loss of confidence in the US as a mediator.

For credible third-party mediation, countries with stronger regional ties and economic clout, such as Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, appear to be more effective in re-enabling the diplomatic channel.

Hydro-Diplomacy Must Be Activated

With the completion of the dam, the opening and operation of hydro-diplomacy canals has become a necessity. In this context, multilateral diplomatic efforts and trust-building will become increasingly important.

The door to diplomacy must be kept open, and efforts must be increased to ensure coordination, instant data sharing, and limit unilateral actions during dry years.

Because unilateral dam operation during dry periods will threaten agricultural production and drinking water security in Egypt and Sudan. Furthermore, a diplomatic vacuum will increase the risk of escalating regional tensions. In the new situation created by the dam's completion, the only way out for both parties is to take confidence-building steps through hydro-diplomacy.

Shared regional development perspective can play an important role to activate hydro-diplomacy channels. Electricity exports and regional energy integration could transform the Nile waters from a source of conflict into a source of cooperation. Innovative hydropolitics is needed. Otherwise, the Nile basin will become the scene of increasingly fierce geopolitical competition.

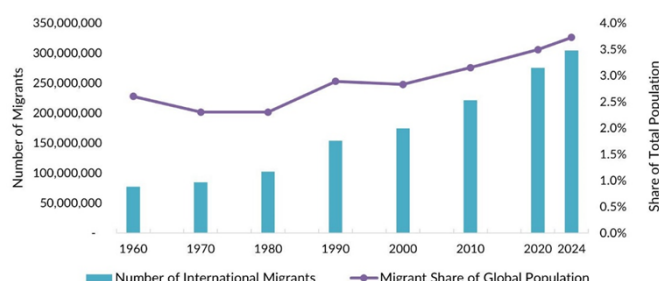
Global Migration Has Roughly Doubled in Number Since 1990

August 26, 2025

The number of international migrants globally has nearly doubled since 1990, to a record 304 million as of 2024. Measured another way, global migrants represent a population that is larger than that of every single country in the world except for India, China, and the United States.

Yet international migrants comprise just 3.7 percent of the global population. While that represents an increase over the 2.9 percent share from 35 years ago, global migrants represent just a tiny fraction of the world's more than 8.2 billion people.

Number and Share of Global Migrants, 1960-2024



Europe and North America are home to the largest number of migrants globally, while also being the origin of more emigrants than any other region.

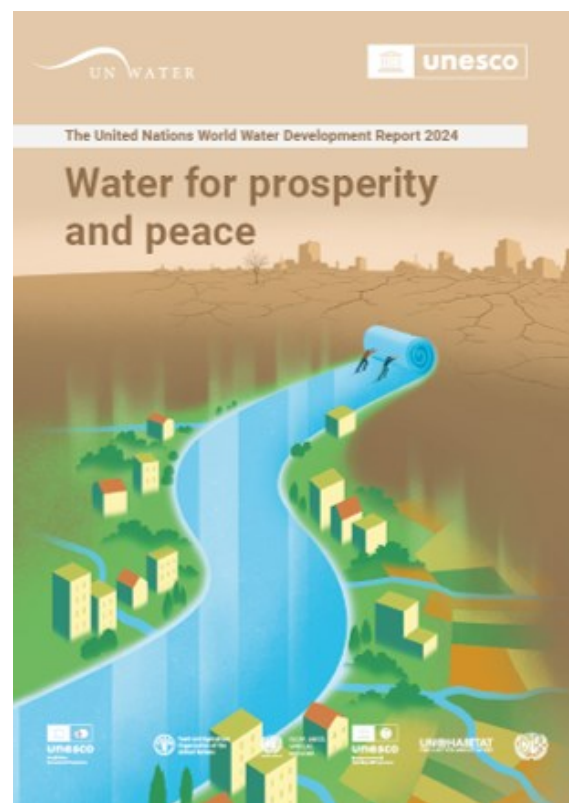
Approximately 13 percent of all international migrants are children under age 18. But children are much more likely to be forcibly displaced, accounting for about 40 percent of all 123 million humanitarian migrants worldwide.

Migrants are more likely than natives to be in the global labor force, accounting for approximately one in every 20 workers.



Source :www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-statistics-global-migration-migrants

Water crises threaten world peace (report)



The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024, published by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water, highlights that tensions over water are exacerbating conflicts worldwide. To preserve peace, States must boost international cooperation and transboundary agreements.

As water stress increases, so do the risks of local or regional conflict. UNESCO's message is clear: if we want to preserve peace, we must act swiftly not only to safeguard water resources but also to enhance regional and global cooperation in this area.

Audrey Azoulay UNESCO Director-General

Water, when managed sustainably and equitably, can be a source of peace and prosperity. It is also the literal lifeblood of agriculture, the major socio-economic driver for billions of people.

Alvaro Lario President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and Chair of UN-Water



According to the new report published by UNESCO, on behalf of UN-Water, today 2.2 billion people still live without access to safely managed drinking water and 3.5 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation. The UN goal of ensuring this access for all by 2030 is therefore far from being attained, and there is reason to fear that these inequalities may continue to rise.

Between 2002 and 2021 droughts affected more than 1.4 billion people. As of 2022, roughly half of the world's population experienced severe water scarcity for at least part of the year, while one quarter faced 'extremely high' levels of water stress, using over 80% of their annual renewable freshwater supply. Climate change is projected to increase the frequency and severity of these phenomena, with acute risks for social stability.

An urgent need for transboundary agreements

This water scarcity can increase the risk of conflict. In the Sahel region, wetland degradation – often due to ill-advised water development projects – has exacerbated local disputes over access to water and productive land, causing tensions.

While approximately 40% of the world's population lives in transboundary river and lake basins, only a fifth of countries have cross border agreements to jointly manage these shared resources equitably. Many transboundary basins are already located in areas marked by current or past interstate tensions. In the Arab region, seven countries were in conflict in 2021 – some dating back many years – which has had wide-ranging implications for water supply, infrastructure, and potential cooperation on water-related issues.

Africa remains especially vulnerable to interstate tensions relating to water: 19 out of 22 states studied suffer from water scarcity, and two-thirds of the continent's freshwater resources are transboundary. Of the 106 transboundary aquifers mapped in Africa, interstate cooperation has only been formalized in seven.

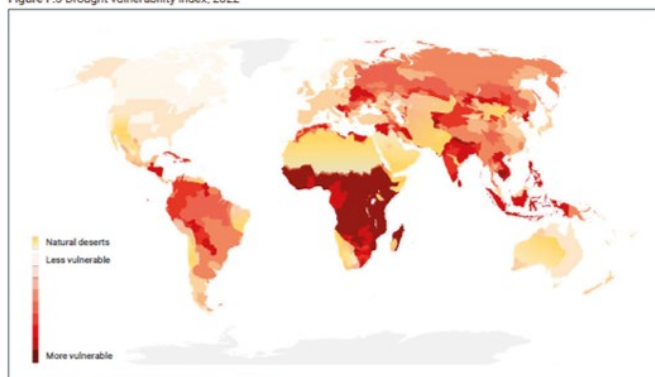
Concrete progress in cooperation in several regions

In this context, cooperation on transboundary water management appears to be a powerful lever for maintaining peace. By creating conditions for regular dialogue between all parties and instituting the necessary legal frameworks, this cooperation has the potential to resolve most disputes relating to water, and therefore prevent the emergence or exacerbation of wider-ranging conflicts. The Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB), signed in 2002 by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, was the first multilateral, development-oriented

It has successfully laid the groundwork for sustainable water management. Two decades after its adoption, it has become a key driver of stability in the region, and now serves as an example of best practice for other regions of the world.

The decline in volume of Lake Chad – which has decreased in size by 90% over 60 years – has led to a broad range of economic and security challenges in the region. Yet in recent years, Cameroon, Chad, the Central Africa Republic, Libya,

Figure P.5 Drought vulnerability index, 2022



Source: UNOCD (2022, fig. 4, p. 15), based on Carrão et al. (2016).

Niger and Nigeria have given a new impetus to the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). LCBC's mandate has expanded to ensure the most efficient use of the basin's waters, coordinate local development, and prevent the emergence of disputes that might arise among these countries and local communities. LCBC is today the most appropriate institution for addressing the specific needs of the basin, including socio-economic development and security issues.

These two examples highlight the fact that, even in complex situations, states have the means to enact policies around access to water and shared resource management that are both fair and equitable thanks to international cooperation and the support of the United Nations system.





October 2025

News Coordinator: Dr. Nuran YILDIZ
Dr. Doğan YILDIZ
Content : HPA Technical Unit – www.hidropolitikakademi.org
Editor: Dursun Yıldız
Design : günada Strateji Türkiye

The contents of the articles in this document is the sole responsibility of writers and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the HPA

<http://hidropolitikakademi.org>



We need to build a future,
Where people live in harmony with nature

HPA

Think Forward .Lead Forward