

U.N. report warns of global water crisis amid climate change

The Columbian (Vancouver, Washington)

October 6, 2021 Wednesday

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Section: NATION; Pg. A3

Length: 299 words

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Highlight: FILE - In this Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021 file photo, paramilitary police work to evacuate people trapped in a flooded area in Suizhou in central China's Hubei Province. Flooding in central China continued to cause havoc in both cities and rural areas. According to a United Nations report released on Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, much of the world is unprepared for the floods, hurricanes and droughts expected to worsen with **climate change** and urgently needs better warning systems to avert water-related disasters. (Chinatopix via AP)

FILE - In this Friday, Sept. 24, 2021 file photo, a shepherd stands in the dry riverbed at Colesberg, Northern Cape, South Africa. According to a United Nations report released on Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, much of the world is unprepared for the floods, hurricanes and droughts expected to worsen with **climate change** and urgently needs better warning systems to avert water-related disasters. (AP Photo/Themba Hadebe)

FILE - In this Thursday, Sept 2, 2021 file photo, vehicles are stranded by high water on the Major Deegan Expressway in the Bronx borough of New York as high water left behind by Hurricane Ida still stands on the highway hours later. According to a United Nations report released on Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, much of the world is unprepared for the floods, hurricanes and droughts expected to worsen with **climate change** and urgently needs better warning systems to avert water-related disasters. (AP Photo/Craig Ruttle)

Body

WASHINGTON - Much of the world is unprepared for the floods, hurricanes and droughts expected to worsen with **climate change** and urgently needs better warning systems to avert water-related disasters, according to a report by the United Nations' weather agency.

Global water management is "fragmented and inadequate," the report published Tuesday found, with nearly 60 percent of 101 countries surveyed needing improved forecasting systems that can help prevent devastation from severe weather.

As populations grow, the number of people with inadequate access to water is also expected to rise to more than 5 billion by 2050, up from 3.6 billion in 2018, the report said.

Among the actions recommended by the report were better warning systems for flood- and drought-prone areas that can identify, for example, when a river is expected to swell. Better financing and coordination among countries on water management is also needed, according to the report by the U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization, development agencies and other groups.

"We need to wake up to the looming water crisis," said Petteri Taalas, secretary general of the World Meteorological Organization.

The report found that since 2000, flood-related disasters globally rose 134 percent compared with the previous two decades. Most flood-related deaths and economic losses were in Asia, where extreme rainfall caused massive flooding in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal and Pakistan in the past year.

The frequency of drought-related disasters rose 29 percent over the same period. African countries recorded the most-drought related deaths. The steepest economic losses from drought were in North America, Asia and the Caribbean, the report said. The following fields overflowed: REFERENCE = 10-06 A3 UN-Global Water Crisis_A03

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: UNITED NATIONS (95%); WEATHER (92%); **CLIMATE CHANGE** (90%); DROUGHT (90%); ENVIRONMENTAL ACCIDENTS & DISASTERS (90%); FLOODS & FLOODING (90%); HURRICANES (90%); INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (90%); METEOROLOGY (90%); NEGATIVE NEWS (90%); OCEANOGRAPHIC & ATMOSPHERIC SERVICES (90%); RIVERS (90%); SEVERE WEATHER (90%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (90%); WATER CRISES & SHORTAGES (90%); FOOD SECURITY (89%); NATURAL DISASTERS (78%); TROPICAL STORMS (78%); POPULATION GROWTH (76%); PARAMILITARY & MILITIA (73%)

Industry: PUBLISHING (78%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (73%); CENTRAL CHINA (91%); WASHINGTON, USA (90%); HUBEI, CHINA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); CHINA (94%); UNITED STATES (93%); ASIA (92%); AFRICA (79%); CARIBBEAN ISLANDS (79%); INDIA (79%); INDONESIA (79%); JAPAN (79%); NORTH AMERICA (79%); PAKISTAN (79%); SOUTH AFRICA (79%)

Load-Date: October 6, 2021