Water

Sustainable Development Goal 6

International Environment Forum

Youth Discourse - Water

Sustainable Development Goal 6

6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

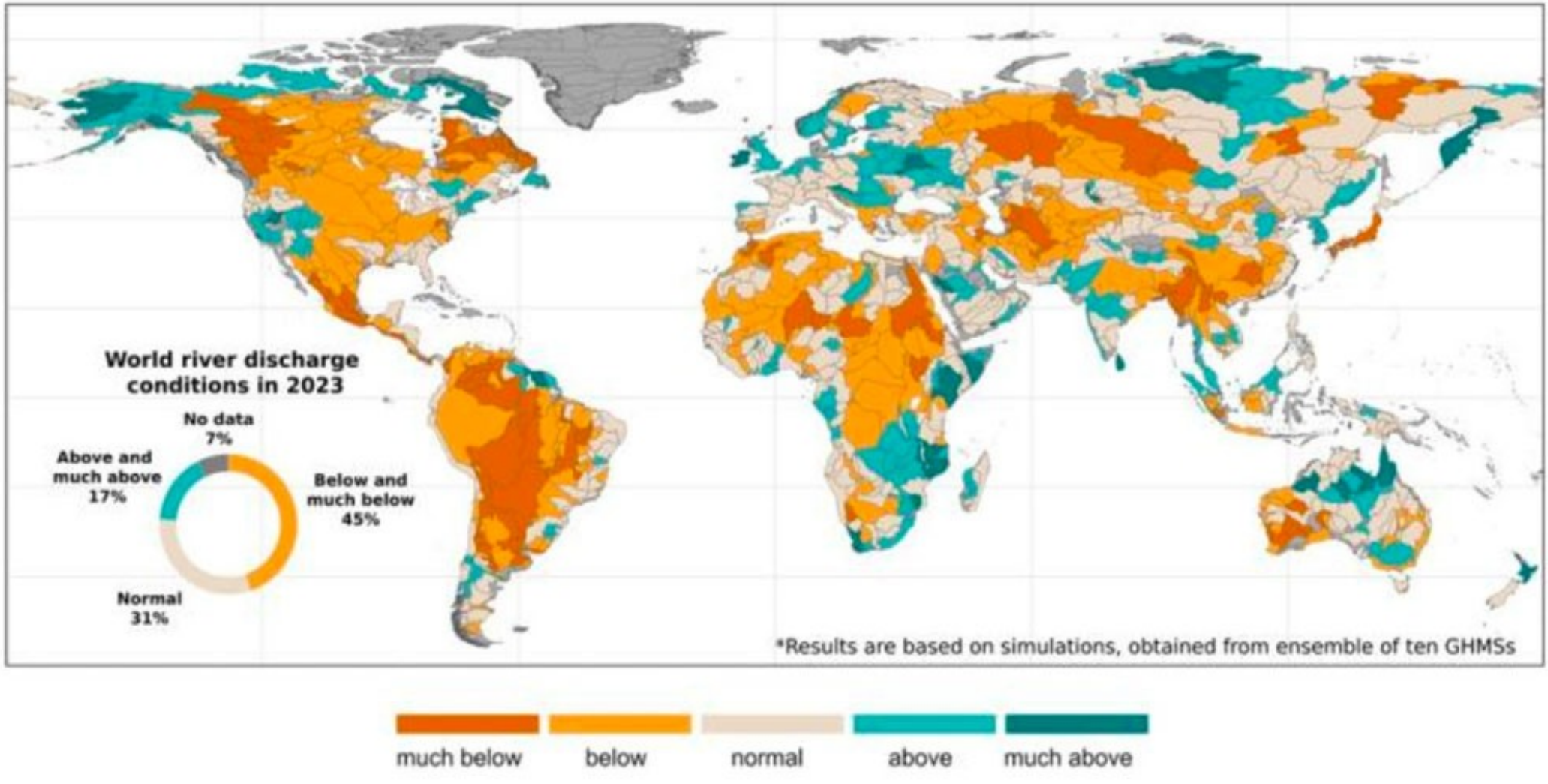
Water is essential for life

We cannot live without water. All life depends on water. Your body is 60 percent water. Without water you will quickly die of thirst. We may take water for granted, but it is an increasingly scarce resource.

Water Resources

Global water resources are under severe stress threatening water supplies, with five consecutive years of below-normal river flows and reservoir inflows. This shortage is affecting communities, agriculture, and ecosystems. In addition, glaciers experienced their largest mass loss in the last 50 years, with 2023 marking the second year of widespread ice loss globally, and glaciers feed many rivers.

(World Meteorological Organization, State of Global Water Resources 2023)



River discharge 2023

Water Resources

- 2023 was the hottest year on record, marked by prolonged droughts and widespread floods, driven by both the La Niña to El Niño transition and human-induced climate change
- Climate change makes the hydrological (water) cycle become more erratic
- 3.6 billion people currently face water shortages, projected to exceed 5 billion by 2050.

(World Meteorological Organization, State of Global Water Resources 2023)

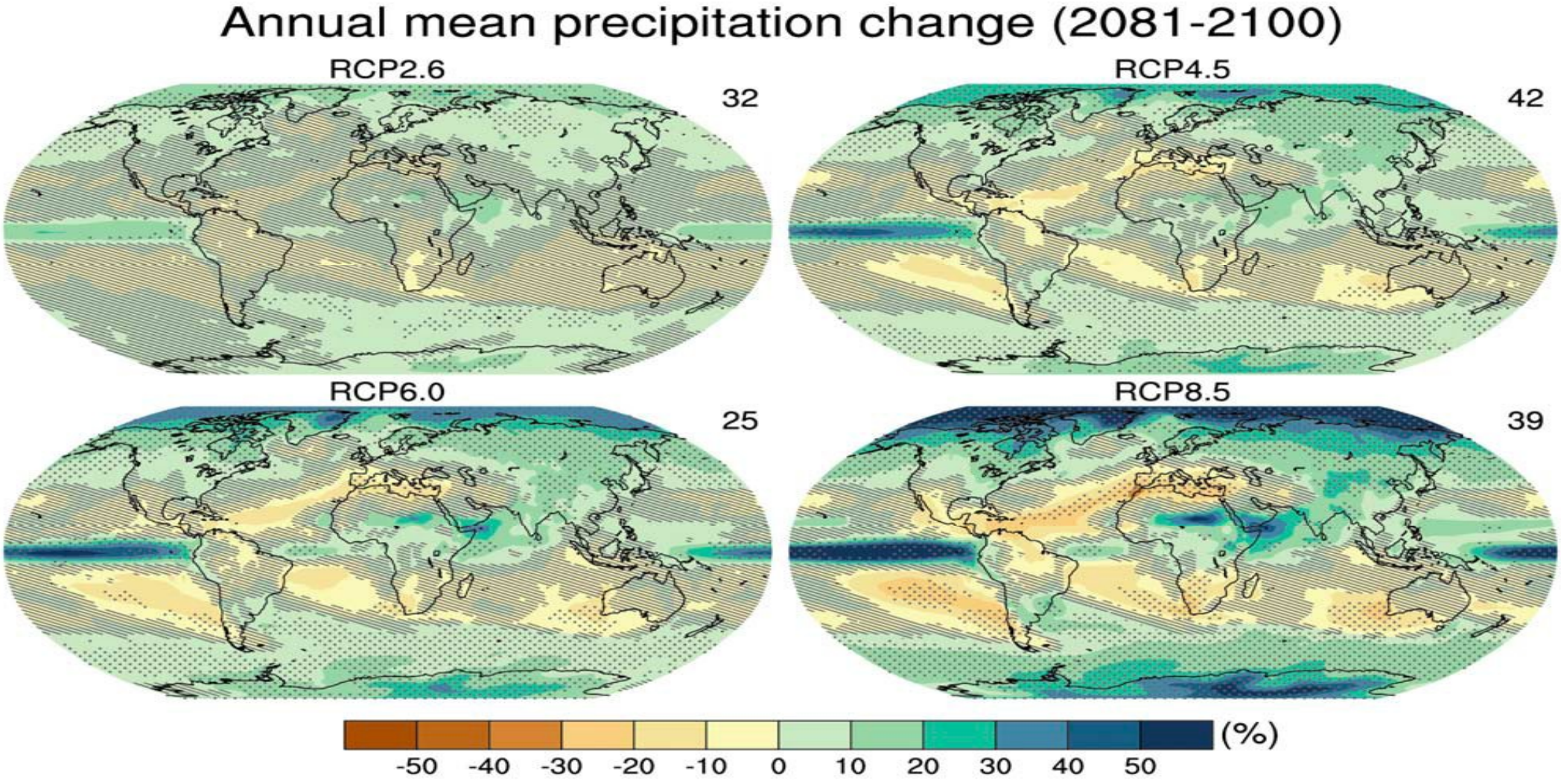
Drought

Water Resources

Water is the canary in the coalmine of climate change. We receive distress signals in the form of increasingly extreme rainfall, floods and droughts which wreak a heavy toll on lives, ecosystems and economies. Melting ice and glaciers threaten long-term water security for many millions of people.

(World Meteorological Organization, State of Global Water Resources 2023)

Predicted changes in precipitation



IPCC 2013

Water Shortage

- 90% of freshwater from streams and groundwater is used for agriculture
- Crop production needs to grow 50% by 2050, with irrigation increasing by 146%, but there is no water
- By 2025, 1.8b people will live in regions with absolute water scarcity, and 2/3 of the world population could be subject to water stress as climate change reduces rainfall in these areas

Water Stressed Countries

25 most water stressed countries: Bahrain, Cyprus, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Botswana, Iran, Jordan, Chile, San Marino, Belgium, Greece, Tunisia, Namibia, South Africa, Iraq, India, Syria

(WRI)

water reservoir

Safe and Just Earth System Boundaries

WATER

Surface water: less than 20% monthly flow alteration
BREACHED FOR 34% OF GLOBAL AREA

Groundwater: Annual drawdown less than or equal to recharge BREACHED FOR 47% OF GLOBAL AREA

(https://iefworld.org/EarthBoundaries2023)

Water Waste

- In communities, up to a third of water leaks from pipes.
- Much water is wasted in agriculture, but increasing irrigation efficiency encourages growing thirstier crops.
- Desalination of water costs 5-10 times as much
- Raising and feeding livestock uses lots of water, so an animal-free diet is better

Water in the Bahá’í Faith

In the Bahá'í Faith, to bathe or wash in clean water is a spiritual law, as is washing every soiled thing in water that has not been altered in colour, taste or smell. Physical cleanliness is associated with spiritual cleanliness and purity. Ablutions with water precede daily prayer. The Bahá'í writings state that "Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will conduce to spirituality."

Thirst

When man refuseth to use material means, he is like a thirsty one who seeketh to quench his thirst through means other than water or other liquids. The Almighty Lord is the provider of water, and its maker, and hath decreed that it be used to quench man's thirst, but its use is dependent upon His Will. If it should not be in conformity with His Will, man is afflicted with a thirst which the oceans cannot quench.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet, translated from the Persian, in: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, Compilation of Compilations, pages 231-232)

Water

Ye are all created out of water, and unto dust shall ye return.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, §148, p. 73)

Ridvan Garden, Bahji

Clean Water

Wash ye every soiled thing with water that hath undergone no alteration in any one of the three respects [colour, taste, smell]; take heed not to use water that hath been altered through exposure to the air or to some other agent. Be ye the very essence of cleanliness amongst mankind.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, §74, p. 46-47)

Clean Water

It hath been enjoined upon you... to bathe yourselves each week in water that covereth your bodies, and to clean yourselves with whatsoever ye have formerly employed.

Immerse yourselves in clean water; it is not permissible to bathe yourselves in water that hath already been used.

If the bather, instead of entering the water, wash himself by pouring it upon his body, it shall be better for him and shall absolve him of the need for bodily immersion.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, §106, p. 58)

Cleanliness

...in every aspect of life, purity and holiness, cleanliness and refinement, exalt the human condition and further the development of man's inner reality. Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will conduce to spirituality, as the Holy Writings clearly state. And although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath, nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit…. The purport is that physical cleanliness doth also exert its effect upon the human soul.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, pages 146-147)

Polluted Water and Sanitation

See that ye approach not the public pools of Persian baths; whoso maketh his way toward such baths will smell their fetid odor ere he entereth therein. Shun them, O people, and be not of those who ignominiously accept such vileness. In truth, they are as sinks of foulness and contamination, if ye be of them that apprehend.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, §106, p. 58)

Water as metaphor

The earth is in motion and growth; the mountains, hills and prairies are green and pleasant; the bounty is overflowing; the mercy universal; the rain is descending from the cloud of mercy; the brilliant Sun is shining; the full moon is ornamenting the horizon of ether; the great ocean-tide is flooding every little stream; the gifts are successive; the favours consecutive; and the refreshing breeze is blowing, wafting the fragrant perfume of the blossoms.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Tablets of Abdul-Bahá Abbas", vol. III (Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930), p. 641.)

Water as metaphor

...in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'an saith: `And pure water send We down from Heaven,' and the Gospel: `Except a man be baptized of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.' Thus is it clear that the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, pages 146-147)

Water as metaphor

O YE SEEMING FAIR YET INWARDLY FOUL! Ye are like clear but bitter water, which to outward seeming is crystal pure but of which, when tested by the divine Assayer, not a drop is accepted. Yea, the sun beam falls alike upon the dust and the mirror, yet differ they in reflection even as doth the star from the earth: nay, immeasurable is the difference!

(Bahá'u'lláh: *Persian Hidden Words*, page 25)

Water as metaphor

Water is the cause of life, and when Christ speaks of water, He is symbolizing that which is the cause of Everlasting Life.
This life-giving water of which He speaks is like unto fire, for it is none other than the Love of God, and this love means life to our souls.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, page 82)