

The first major UN conference on water in 45 years got under way on Wednesday in New York with an urgent call to manage the precious resource.

In his speech, UN's secretary-general, António Guterres, stressed the importance of water as key to development.

“Water is a human right — and a common development denominator to shape a better future. But water is in deep trouble. (...) We've broken the water cycle, destroyed ecosystems and contaminated groundwater. Nearly three out of four natural disasters are linked to water. One in four people lives without safely managed water services or clean drinking water. And over 1.7 billion people lack basic sanitation”, denounced António Guterres.

Ahead of the conference, the US ambassador at the UN announced that the United States had pledged \$49 billion towards water security at home and around the world.

A 2022 study by the University of California, Los Angeles, estimated that almost half of the world's population will suffer severe water stress by 2030.

On Tuesday the UN released the World Water Development Report 2023. Among its findings it says 26 per cent of the world's population doesn't have access to safe drinking water and 46 per cent lacks access to basic sanitation.