

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / UN warns of looming global water crisis

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This is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

I'm Valerie Sanderson at 14 hours GMT on Wednesday the 22nd of March. These are our main stories.

The United Nations warns of a looming global water crisis and an imminent risk of shortages due to overconsumption and climate change. The French President Emmanuel Macron insists that his

unpopular pension reforms are necessary and he wants them to come into force by the end of the year. Rights groups in Uganda express concern about a new draft law which would make it a crime for people to identify as LGBT. Also in this podcast, President Zelensky visits Ukrainian troops near the embattled town of Bakhmut. The former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson

fights for his political life and... So it tastes just like normal food. I know that the sound of printed food may not be very appetizing but you have to remember we're using all the same ingredients

you normally cook with. Whatever next? Everything you wanted to know about the new no-bake cheesecake.

Water covers two-thirds of our planet. It's such a common place that it's perhaps all too easily taken for granted. But according to the UN, water shortages around the world are creating the imminent risk of a global crisis. The figures are mind-boggling. Some two billion people lack access to safe drinking water and half of the world's population, that's some 3.6 billion people, lack access to reliable sanitation. In a moment we'll be hearing from the woman who's hosting the UN's first conference on water security for more than four decades. But first, a quick flavour of the reality of what water scarcity actually means for those unlucky enough to have no reliable source of clean water.

Akli Alwi is a climate and environmental activist based in Kenya. She was raised in Malindi on the coast but now lives in the capital Nairobi. Many of the houses around my area in Nairobi, we don't get access to fresh water, it's usually borehole water and since the rains have started, the water that we might get is not as clean as it's supposed to be so we cannot drink that water or use it for anything. I come from Malindi. Growing up I never knew the issues that others will have to go through to get water. We had piping, we used to get access to fresh water but now we don't get fresh water anymore. Those dug a lot of boreholes and early in the morning before kids actually start going to school some have to fetch water, leave it at home and then go to school and then do the same thing after school. It's to tackle problems like those mentioned by Akli Alwi that the United Nations has called its first water summit in more than four decades starting today in New York and aimed at making universal access to safe water and sanitation a reality by 2030. The UN's Under Secretary General Usha Rao Manari is the official

host of the conference and she's been talking to James Coppinal. Water is one of those subjects that is under discussed unfortunately because people think water is an infinite resource that they will always have. What has happened over the last so many decades and particularly as we are in the Anthropocene, water as a natural resource has turned out to be pretty finite and it's also becoming even shorter in supply due to various events including climate change, biodiversity loss, population growth, urbanization and so on and so forth. So the purpose of this conference and why it's so important we gather here today is to make almost a reset on how we look at the water sector and at the resource and its relationship with people and the planet. Is that going to be then about saying to people look there are going to be certain limits you're going to have to abide by in the future? Is it about looking at creative new ways of getting more water? I think it's going to be both with an emphasis on the latter. I think that there is enough water on the planet if we manage it more effectively than we have managed it over the last few decades. I think we will have to find new governance models, new finance models, new models of using water and reusing water than ever before. I think technology and innovation will play a very large role in looking at how to manage the water sector and the use of water. And how optimistic can you be that that sort of thing actually will happen? Because if you look at the way the world has proved so slow to act over climate change there are probably a fair few reasons to be pessimistic. So I am not a pessimist. I believe that our best world still lies ahead of us if we make the right choices now. And I believe that the way we are looking at water today is the way we should be looking at water. What does that mean? So first of all, I think our collective mismanagement of water has pushed the global water cycle out of balance for the first time in human history. And that's an important point to recognize. Because till now we thought whatever we did, however much we used, it was okay. Well, it's not, and we're realizing the effects of that. In addition, the water crisis is increasingly intertwined with global warming and the loss of biodiversity, which is just making the impact of water on the planet and on people much more unstable. And so I think if we look at where we are today, we in fact have many of the technologies. We have many of the business and governance models. We have the infrastructure models that we can actually put into place to manage water better than we've ever done before. The UN under Secretary-General Usha Rahmanari talking to James Coppinal.

It's proved to be an incredibly unpopular decision. President Macron's move to push through an increase

in the pension age from 62 to 64 has caused uproar in protests in Paris and across the country and in parliament, where two days ago, his government narrowly survived a vote of no confidence. Now, Mr Macron has gone on television to defend his decision.

Do you think it makes me happy bringing in this reform? No. Do you think I could have swept it under the carpet like others before me? Yes, perhaps. But the reality is, I regret that we haven't made everyone understand how necessary this reform is. When I started working, there were 10 million pensioners. Now there are 17 million. In the 2030s, there will be 20 million.

Do you think we can carry on with the same rules? Our Europe regional editor, Danny Eberhard, told me that Mr Macron has made it clear he's not for turning. That clip summed it up very nicely.

Basically, Mr Macron was not retreating one iota from his position. He was not contrite in any way. He was quite combative in places. He's saying basically he's prepared to accept the unpopularity of this reform, but that it was necessary in the interests of the country. Basically, he took a position where he was saying it was about intergenerational responsibility as well,

that you can't let the pension system fall greater and greater into deficit without affecting your children. So he was very hard on what he says were the extreme factions who were threatening elected officials. He glossed over the idea that this reform was pushed through the lower house of parliament without a vote, saying it was part of a democratic process to use this constitutional procedure and that there was no alternative majority. Opposition parties failed to get the no confidence motion through on Monday. So he talked in more general terms about reopening dialogue with the unions, about working conditions and talked about how companies making big profits should make some sort of contribution. But there was very little really to calm the situation if that was what he intended. It's interesting, isn't it, Danny, because this is a problem facing many countries in the Western world and many countries in Europe like the UK have already put their pension age up. So is it a failure, do you think, of political communication that he's not got this message across before now?

Well, he certainly seems to think that as the problem rather than the substance of the change. France has periodically come up against reforms of its pension system. In 2010, they raised the pension age from 60 to 62 and that caused big convulsions across French society. We're now seeing the latest stage of this. He's saying you cannot wait. Every year that we wait, the pension system becomes weaker and weaker and you either have to increase pension contributions or cut pension payments. That's the only alternative. The unions disagree.

Danny Eberhard. As we record this edition of the Global News Podcast, the former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is beginning to give evidence to a parliamentary committee looking into allegations that he knowingly misled MPs on what he knew about banned parties in Downing

Street at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The outcome could decide his political future. Mr Johnson was fined by police for breaking pandemic rules but says his assurances to MPs were made in good faith. Last summer he was forced to stand down as Prime Minister after a series of

scandals which included what became known as Partygate. Here's our political correspondent, Rob Watson. This is going to be an astonishing spectacle. I mean essentially we have a former Prime Minister sitting in front of seven MPs. It's all going to be televised and they've effectively accused him of lying. I mean you could use posh words like misleading but basically it's that he intentionally lied to Parliament about what he knew and absolutely it will be these seven MPs who make a decision about whether any misleading that was done was intentional or not and as you say Boris Johnson has vociferously I mean stridently argued that he has not so it's going to be quite a showdown. So what he said so far what's his argument there? His argument is basically that look at the time of these events I kind of thought that they were inside the rules and the guidance and then several months later when he denied that there were any parties or violations of rules and guidance in Parliament that still even at that time the advice from his staff was you know don't worry Prime Minister no rules have been broken. Now it's clear from an interim report that the committee of seven MPs put out that they don't believe that. I mean they think that it's I think the phrase they used it surely it must have been obvious it must have been planes to the Prime Minister that rules and guidance were broken and I think in a way that's that's the sort of stalemate here that both the Prime Minister and the MPs they've been looking

at exactly the same evidence they don't have different evidence but they've reached entirely

different conclusions so far. So will his performance in front of them will that be the key? I think it will in the sense that if he is as persuasive as he can be I mean sometimes he's terrible and sometimes he's very persuasive he's a very mixed performer that may perhaps sort of sow a seed of doubt in the MP's mind. And what does the outcome mean for Boris Johnson? How big a deal is this? Oh it's huge right I mean this could be this could be the end for Boris Johnson. I mean something. Because he wants to come back doesn't he? Oh yeah I mean never write off Boris Johnson in the sense that he never writes himself off and he's been written off before. I mean it should be said that even before this this sort of set to that there's been a kind of kind of feeling that perhaps he's already yesterday's man perhaps his sort of luck his appeal whatever charm that he ever had with the electorate has sort of drained away even before whatever happens today. Certainly the polls suggest that while that significant minority that think good old Boris the majority do not want him back. And what does it mean for the governing Conservative party his party? It's just pure agony because Rishi Sunak the current Prime Minister had been hoping that he'd restored a certain business as usual in British politics vibe and clearly for at least one day it shatters all that and reminds everyone that the last few years have been pretty chaotic. Rob Watson. People in Japan have celebrated some memorable performances in international

sport in the last few years. There was the time their men's rugby team stunned South Africa at the 2015 World Cup. Then there's the golfer Hideki Matsuyama winning the Masters in 2021. And of course most recently of all the national football team beating Spain at the World Cup in Qatar last year. And now here's another. He throws trout straight south swinging or tiny in Japan celebrate a world baseball classic championship. Yes Japan are the kings of baseball. They've beaten the USA of all teams in the final of the World Baseball Classic which is essentially the World Cup of Baseball. Jason Koskri is the chief baseball writer for the Japan Times and he says winning the WBC is a red letter day for Japan sports lovers. Japan has been building for this tournament for years. This is what Japan does. Baseball is the biggest sport beating the USA is a big deal. Anytime you do it especially in the WBC in Japan hasn't won the WBC in 14 years. So there was a lot of nervousness and then there was just an explosion of happiness when they won. It's just more validation that baseball in Japan is on a world class level that it's not really second to anybody. The major league baseball is obviously the number one league in the sport. But when you break it down country by country I just shows again

that Japan doesn't take a backseat to any country and it's a big a really validating victory for the Japanese after losing in the semifinals in 2013 and 2017 to now get back in and get back on top of the baseball world. Jason Koskri on a big win for Japan. Still to come. If you want Article 5 collective defence and be part of NATO's common defence planning you need to join the alliance. Sweden's defence minister tells us why the country is so keen to join NATO. That's all straight after this. Love Genessa is the true crime podcast from the BBC World Service and CBC podcasts investigating the murky world of online romance camps. She was trying to get me to send her money. Catch up with the whole series now. Search for Love Genessa wherever you found

this podcast. You win their hearts. You win their wallets. Welcome back to the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service. Late on Tuesday Parliament in Uganda passed a bill that will, if it's signed into law by President Evarista Nsububa, criminalise people who identify as gay or members

of a sexual minority. Under the new regulations friends family and members of the community would have a duty to report individuals in same-sex relationships to the authorities. Homosexual acts are already illegal in the East African country but the bill seeks to go further and criminalise people on the basis of their sexual identity. It even includes the death penalty for some offences. Addressing Parliament 1 MP Musa Kweru claimed that the legislation is designed to protect young people. In our country we will have our morals. We will protect our children and we are making this law. We are making this law for ourselves. We are making this law for our children. We are making this law for the children of our children. And once it passes, I can tell you Madam Speaker, we are going to reinforce the law enforcement officers to make sure that homosexuals have no space in Uganda. Stephen, he's asked us to use only his first name, is a gay rights activist in Uganda and he's been telling Reedy Tilabi how the new law makes him feel. Reedy Tilabi We're now scared, very, very scared because we know that the President is going to sign this into law. Anytime that the bill is tabled on his desk, we don't know how the bi-LGBT people are going to be protected now in Uganda because we know they exist and the government knows we exist in Uganda. So we currently don't know how we're going to protect ourselves. Reedy Tilabi Just on that, I mean, you expect the President to sign this bill into law, isn't it? It's still awaiting its signature, but he said a whole lot of harsh words to the gay community. He described gay people as deviance, saying that they are disgusting. So it's almost a given that he will sign this into law. What will you do next? Reedy Tilabi We're only left with apparently looking for our own safety right now, of which we don't know where to run to. We would have ran to our neighbors, but it's still harsh to the neighbors still. So right now, we're staying indoors and staying as safe as possible until we find our way out. I've been battling with death threats through my phone, through my friends, my very own friends, schoolmates that had been going with that school, workmates. So this is an addition to what I've been facing. My life is in danger. My life has been in danger, but at least the people with the same LGBT people, the one I'm with in the same community, are aware of what I am and they're supportive in some way or the other. Reedy Tilabi Patience Atahari is our reporter in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. She's been giving me more details of the new law and its inclusion of the death penalty for specific offenses. The death penalty is specifically for a clause that has details including sexual abuse. It's particular on sexual abuse against children or people who are disabled or vulnerable in any way, or in cases where the victim of the assault gets infected with a life long illness. That is one particular case where the death penalty would come into effect. And it is quite strange because this is the first time in decades that the death penalty has been passed by parliament in a law for any kind of crime. And tougher sentencing all round as well in terms of imprisonment. Yes, the initial draft of the bill had 10 years imprisonment as the toughest penalty all across the document. But in Tuesday's debate, major amendments were made in the bill. For instance, if a person is convicted for grooming or trafficking children for purposes of engaging them in homosexual activities, they face life in prison. Even property owners may go to jail if they rent premises to people and they are used for homosexual activities. In cases where you know a community member or a family member living close to you or next to you,

your duty bound to report them to the authorities. So it passed with major amendments and for most of them, time in jail was much more increased. And Patience, this bill now goes to President Euroma Seveni, doesn't it? Will he ratify it soon, do you think? We think that he very likely will sign it, considering the conversations that have been happening, speeches by the president, speeches by other leaders of government. There seems to be a lot of support from the government and the state towards the bill. There is the feeling generally across the board that the president will ascend to the bill. This law Patience is going to be pitting families against their own gay children. What's been the reaction in the country to it so far?

The few people that I've been speaking to from the queer community in Kampala in the last few days, they are afraid. People have gone into hiding. That's what they say. They can't leave their houses. People are being lowered into traps. People are getting phone calls for blackmail in terms of if you don't give me money, I'll out you to the public, that sort of thing.

Patience at Ahari in Uganda. Police in Germany who carried out nationwide raids as part of investigations into suspected members of a far right movement. The operation follows the discovery of a plot to overthrow the German government. From Berlin, Jenny Hill reports. An officer was shot and injured as police raided properties across the country this morning. They focused their efforts on 19 people suspected of having information about or being members of the so-called Reichsbürger movement. Reichsbürger, or citizens of the empire, refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the modern German state. The raids this morning are part of an ongoing investigation after the security services foiled what's believed to have been a Reichsbürger plot to violently overthrow the German government in December. Jenny Hill in Berlin.

For more than seven months, Ukrainian forces in the city of Batmurt have withstood Russian attacks and today President Volodymyr Zelensky has visited the front line near the city. His office said he talked to soldiers and also visited a military hospital in the Donetsk region. I heard more from our correspondent in Kiev, James Landel. What we know is that this morning we've seen images produced by the President's office on his website showing President Zelensky in a large industrial warehouse. We're told it's in the area of Batmurt, near Batmurt, but we haven't told us precisely where. And we see him meeting soldiers who are clearly, you know, visibly battle weary and he talks to them, he praises their courage, he thanks them for their service. He said that they had the difficult but historical fate of defending Ukraine for the next generation, for its children. Then he handed out medals, chatted to them privately, they took selfies together. And as you say, he also visited a military hospital at a separate location in the Donetsk region. The importance of this, the symbolism of this is clearly the timing. Over the last couple of days, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, he has visited occupied Ukraine, Mariupol. He's been hosting President's Chief of China in Moscow. This is clearly the symbolic response by the Ukrainian side, essentially a message by President Zelensky going to the town of Batmurt, which as you said, has been fending off Russian attacks for seven months now. This city epitomizes, if you like, the Ukrainian resilience. It's also a symbol of the failure of Russia's war aims. So I think Mr Zelensky has gone there very, very deliberately.

And how is that battle grinding on? Well, as ever, it's really hard to get accurate, reliable information from the front line, because we're relying on essentially Russian and Ukrainian sources. And those are very, very hard for the BBC to verify. Because remember, both sides in this conflict are in the business of misinformation, as well as reporting accurately. The fighting there has continued. The impression that some Western analysts and officials are getting

is that maybe Russian momentum is beginning to reduce, that they've reached their peak, and that at that point, there's a suggestion that maybe Ukraine has held on. But that's just the latest impression we're getting. James Landale speaking to me from Kyiv.

For decades, Finland and Sweden attempted to maintain neutrality. Now, though, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and with concerns for their own national security growing, both countries are attempting to join the Western Military Alliance NATO. NATO is keen. In a speech on Tuesday, the body's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that Vladimir Putin wanted less NATO, but he's got exactly the opposite. He's got more NATO. Finland seems set to join in the near future, which will double the Western Alliance's border with Russia. But Sweden is facing more difficulties, with one NATO member in particular, Turkey, opposed to its candidacy. Swedish MPs are about to discuss the issue.

James Coppinall has been speaking to the country's Defence Minister, Paul Jonsson, and began by asking him why membership of the security bloc matters so much to the country. I think after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it became bluntly clear that Russia is willing to take bigger political and military risks than many thought was likely. It also became clear that NATO supports its partners, but it defends its allies. Of course, also Ukraine was a member of partnership for peace, and they had something called Enhanced Opportunity Partners, but they were not a member of the Alliance. And if you want Article 5, Collective Defence, and be part of NATO's common defence planning, you need to join the Alliance. It looks very much like Finland will get membership before Sweden. Is the problem simply Turkey's reservations? Well, there's two countries now that's and ratified. It's Hungary and it's Turkey, and at the same time we take note that 28 out of 30 allies have ratified our application in their record speeds. As far as Turkey goes, they have expressed concern in regards to matters related to arms export and related to combating terrorism. Therefore, we have a trilateral MOU between Sweden, Finland and Turkey, and we're working on implementing that MOU. But in the end, of course, only Ankara can make that decision. Moscow has made it very clear that it is against the idea of more countries joining NATO, that it feels it a threat, a fundamental threat almost to its existence. Is that something that does concern you, or do you feel that Russia is essentially expending all of its military energy in the conflict in Ukraine? Well, let me be crystal clear on that Russia do not have a veto over Swedish or Finnish defence policy decisions. As far as the Russian military capabilities go, of course, a lot of the Russian ground forces right now are bogged down in Ukraine. At the same time, sooner or later, of course, Russia is going to militarily reconstitute itself, and it's going to be a difficult neighbor for Sweden and Finland for many years to come. I think we have important assets and capabilities that can make NATO stronger. Sweden has, for example, a strong air force. We have Patriot missiles. We have submarines, and we have a rather vibrant defence industrial base. Paul Jonsson speaking there to James Coppel.

And finally, 3D printing is nothing new. Researchers have been pushing the limits for years, creating furniture, weapons, human organs, and even a rocket. But how about a dessert? Well, engineers at Columbia University in the United States have done just that, as Rebecca Wood reports. Search for a cheesecake recipe and you're likely to find a list of familiar ingredients, butter, cream cheese, sugar, and so on. But the recipe probably won't call for a 3D printer. That is, unless you work at Columbia University's Creative Machines Lab in New York. There, engineers have created a 3D printed cheesecake, turning cartridges of food paste

and powder into a 7-ingredient dessert. Here's one of the team, Jonathan Blutingier. What we do is we go to our grocery store, we'll grab ingredients that are already in paste, so almost like, you know, peanut butter, cream cheese. If they are not in a paste, like graham cracker, for example, we will bring them back to our lab, we'll put them in, you know, a Vitamix or a blender, and then we will load it into these individual, basically syringes, which we call our food cartridges, and our machine can pick one up, print with one of them, drop it off, pick up another one, do this over and over again until we have a fully formed 3D model. So, we understand the technology, but is it appetising? Well, having seen pictures of some of the earliest attempts, I'd say they don't get the taste buds tingling. It's perhaps best described as a pile of regurgitated spaghetti on a plate. But, undeterred, the team plow on, and things start to improve as the printer squeezes out puddings that are certainly recognisable, if still not quite irresistible. Looks aren't everything though, what about taste? Here's Jonathan again. So, it tastes just like normal food. I know that the sound of printed food may not be very appetising, but you have to remember we're using all the same ingredients you normally cook with, so in the same way that you would chop ingredients to, you know, prepare them to saute, we are just blending them into a paste, so we're not really diminishing any nutritional value, we're just reshaping it basically. So, today a cheesecake, what could tomorrow bring? Should we be decluttering and making space on our kitchen worktops for a printer? I kind of see this happening in three different waves. I think the first wave is going to be 3D printers in off-site manufacturing facilities to create particular food substitutes. So, I'm seeing this with plant-based meats in a big way, where it's actually being marketed all around Europe. Companies are doing this, they're using 3D printing to actually mimic animal products, but with plants. The second wave, I think, will be, it starts to invade restaurants, and then eventually, I think, once people become more comfortable with it, then eventually it'll be in the form of a kitchen appliance that people can actually use in their homes. Rest easy, Gordon Ramsay and Alan DeCasse. There's no need for our celebrity chefs to panic just yet. Food for thought, from Rebecca Wood. And that's it from us for now, but there'll be a new edition of the Global News podcast later. If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it, send us an email. The address is GlobalPodcast at bbc.co.uk, and you can also find us on Twitter at GlobalNewsPod. This edition was mixed by Louis Alsop. The producer was Mark Duff. The editor is ever is Karen Martin. I'm Valerie Sanderson. Until next time, bye-bye.