

Messages from members of the French Water Partnership

WATER & CLIMATE: URGENT ACTION NEEDED !

CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAVING A SERIOUS IMPACT ON WATER RESOURCES. It is contributing to modifying the spatial and temporal distribution of water and exacerbating existing pressures caused by demographic growth, urbanisation, changing lifestyles, etc.

In many regions, extreme weather events like floods, droughts and hurricanes are becoming more intense and frequent, coupled with rising sea levels, thereby posing a threat to territories, economic and social development, and the environment.

All the current nationally stated mitigation ambitions put the planet on a pathway to a global warming of between +3°C and +3.2°C by the end of the 21st century. Yet as the IPCC reminds us in its special report published in October 2018, going from 1.5°C to 2°C would already very seriously worsen risks related to heavy rainfall, extreme events, droughts and rising sea levels. Discover [our keys to understanding the report](#) on the FWP website (in French).

- Limiting global warming to **1.5°C** rather than **2°C** could reduce the proportion of the world population exposed to water stress by **50%** (*IPCC, 2018*)
- Climate-driven water scarcity could cost some regions up to **6%** of their GDP (*World Bank, 2016*)
- Around **143 million** people, or 2.8% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America, could be forced to move within their own countries to avoid the impacts of climate change (*World Bank, 2018*)

THE FRENCH WATER PARTNERSHIP'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The 170 members of the French Water Partnership stress the need to urgently reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in order to stay below an average warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. They also draw the international community's attention to the importance of taking climate change adaptation measures which live up to the significant challenges, at the most relevant levels.

MAKE WATER CENTRAL TO CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

93% of the “adaptation” sections of the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submitted at COP21 feature water (FWP-Coalition Eau study, 2016), which shows that states consider it as one of the key issues to combat global warming. Yet very few international discussions focus on water.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should consider water as a priority in negotiations on adaptation, including within the Adaptation Committee and its other bodies.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ROLE OF WATER FOR MITIGATION

The water sector can contribute to mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions through improved energy management related to its different uses: for example, by optimising the treatment and transportation of potable water, waste water and water for irrigation. Water can also provide a sustainable mean to produce and recover energy (biogas recovery from sewage sludge, use of pico-turbines in water supply systems, hydrothermal methods, etc.). This type of action should be encouraged through a circular economy approach.

Conversely, water resources can be threatened by the implementation of certain mitigation measures. It will be particularly important to avoid “bad mitigation” and to improve research into how negative emission measures (e.g. bioenergy with carbon capture and storage) are likely to affect fresh, ground and coastal waters. These measures are viewed as unavoidable by IPCC scientists if we are to maintain warming at 1.5°C. Yet, if deployed on a wide scale, they could have very significant impacts on land and water resources and compete with other resource uses (agriculture, etc.).

ENSURE CONSISTENCY WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The water and climate change question is inextricably related to the SDGs. The success of SDG6 on water and many other SDGs that are directly or indirectly connected to water will depend on our capacity to combat climate change. Similarly, numerous water-related projects will contribute to achieving the SDG13 targets on climate, because water plays a crucial role in adaptation and mitigation. Consistency and complementarity should therefore be central in the implementation of these SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Developing decision-making tools will also be important, both to support territorial players in implementing their mitigation, adaptation and development objectives in a complementary way, and to avoid competition between uses.

STRENGTHEN COMMITMENTS AND MAKE THEM PART OF NATIONAL POLICIES

States must succeed in translating the commitments they made under the Paris Agreement into their national and local policies and strategies. Water should feature as a priority in these public policies integrated with other key areas like energy, food security, health and education. In addition, states must accurately evaluate their progress since COP21, and increase their ambitions when reviewing their commitments. This will involve rapidly setting up a monitoring framework and transparent reviewing mechanisms.

To this end, civil society plays a key role in mobilizing governments to adopt measures, accompany local stakeholders to carry out these strategies at their level, and raise public awareness on the importance of integrating water into national policies. Civil society should therefore be involved in making decisions on issues related to climate change and water management.

DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE AND REINFORCE LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTISTS AND DECISION-MAKERS

In order to best analyze how to respond to climate change, we need to improve our knowledge of the climate and its consequences on water management, in particular at local level, is required. This means getting hold of maximum information to act appropriately on the basis of measured data (weather stations, etc.), projected data (modelling), and water information systems in order to make informed decisions. New data-acquisition tools, such as satellite measurements, should be developed at the same time as improving on-site data-acquisition systems. Sharing and circulation of updated, accessible information should be made easier to improve decision-making.

In addition, the value of local knowledge and traditional know-how should be taken into account when drawing up and implementing policies at all levels.

PRIORITIZE ADAPTATION SOLUTIONS WITH MULTIPLE BENEFITS

Adapting to climate change necessarily involves setting up integrated water resource management systems in national and transboundary basins, including surface and ground water and taking into account the source-to-sea continuum.

In addition, a wide range of adaptation solutions are available depending on local issues and characteristics. The FWP encourages stakeholders to prioritize adaptation solutions with multiple benefits, in particular Nature-based Solutions (NbS). These solutions can be developed as an alternative or a complement to grey and institutional options. Particular care should be taken to avoid “bad adaptation” solutions that risk increasing the vulnerability of populations or ecosystems in the future.

MOBILISE APPROPRIATE FUNDING

To set up action capable of meeting the challenges, developing countries will need to respect their financial commitments of 100 billion USD per year by 2020, as reiterated at COP21. Water should be a major priority of funding for adaptation, with a focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

This funding should be aimed at the most pertinent solutions as set out in the previous paragraph and should also take into account needs in terms of building stakeholder capacities, improving knowledge, and monitoring and evaluating water management policies. To this end, appropriate funding tools should be sought for the various project contractors, in particular for the most disadvantaged countries, regions and communities. These funds should be additional to development aid.

As well as international funding, national, basin and local financing mechanisms will need to be put in place or improved, along with innovative methods such as decentralised cooperation, taxes on financial transactions, etc. Reflections on the issues of loss and damage and climate justice will need to be improved and accelerated in order to limit inequalities in the face of climate change.

STAND UNITED FOR MORE VISIBILITY AND SUPPORT NON-STATE INITIATIVES

The international water community must stand united (e.g. the #ClimatelsWater initiative) and make efforts to work more closely with and be understood by the climate, energy and agriculture communities.

The Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action, launched at CO21 as part of the Action Agenda, should continue to promote and support existing Water and Climate Alliances (e.g. Paris Pact on Water in Basins, Megacities Alliance, Business Alliance, Clean Water Desalination Alliance). Other initiatives, for example those led by young people or NGOs, need to be encouraged and considered more seriously. The governance of these initiatives, and that of the Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action in general, need to be clarified and made transparent (in particular with regards to the selection process as well as the monitoring and evaluation rules), and their financing ought to be ensured.

Find out more about water & climate projects on the FWP website, via the [Water Expertise France](#) platform and in the [Our productions](#) section



The French Water Partnership is the go-to platform for all the public and private French water stakeholders, operating at international level. For more than 10 years, the FWP has been advocating for water so that it becomes a real priority in sustainable development policies worldwide. The FWP also stands as a facilitator for exchanges between the french and international water know-how.

Members of FWP develop projects that directly contribute to SDGs. For more information and details on these projects, visit the Water Expertise France website.

www.water-expertise-france.com