CoP23 - Water, Agriculture and Energy sectors join forces to address climate change issues

Water Action Day during CoP23 sees integrated initiatives and knowledge sharing to enhance climate change resilience and streamlining of procedures to access financing of 255 billion euros a year.

World Water Council, CoP23, Bonn, 15th November, 2017 – Water connects sectors, as they all need water to operate sustainably. The inextricable linkages between water, energy and food require a holistic approach if water and food security, sustainable agriculture and sustainable energy production are to be ensured. Inter-linkages are compelling governments, the private sector, communities, academia and other stakeholders to explore integrated solutions. This approach eases pressures and helps explore development avenues based on a sustainable and efficient use of limited resources. This interlinking approach requires continued dialogue between the different communities, highlighting the significance of forums like the CoP23 and the upcoming World Water Forum in March 2018 in Brazil, in order to meet the Paris Agreement goals.

Optimal water management and investment in water infrastructure requires a top-down and bottom-up integrated strategy. Therefore, local solutions for local problems are often most suited to meet water challenges, as highlighted by Aziza Akhmouch Acting Division Head at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *"Cities that are resilient are actually cities that fix upstream their water problems."* The profound knowledge and mindful resource management for seamless adaptation already exists. It simply requires being shared across sectors as a means to best confront the adverse effects of climate change. It is increasingly evident, for example, that efficient water usage in agriculture is possible. Up to 70% of water is consumed by agriculture, compared to 20% by industry and 10% for domestic needs. The agricultural sector, through shared information, could follow best practices pioneered in unrelated areas by applying shared experiences. "*We would be wise to apply lessons from across the world, even traditional rural populations in Africa or Asia, which have the potential to inform innovative, sagacious and responsible resource management, to adapt our planet to climate variation's onslaught*. *The knowledge is there, we just have to listen and tap into it,"* explains Maggie White, Manager International Policies, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Co-Chair, Alliance for Global Water Adaption (AGWA) and Steering Committee Member of the #ClimateIsWater Initiative.

Loïc Fauchon, Honorary President of the World Water Council (WWC) which coordinates the #ClimateIsWater initiative, moderated the outcomes discussion from the Water Action Day. He indicated that, *"Innovative technical solutions are key to have better and cheaper solutions that drive global water security."* He further underscores, *"the political obligation of cooperation on all levels in governance, financing and knowledge sharing, should translate into enhanced efficiency in optimized integrated water management, and applying it locally, in urban areas, nationally and internationally. Additionally, this should be*

complimented by horizontal collaboration between all sectors, including the five main ones: water, energy, food, health and education." He continues by saying that "*in order to ensure water security, government agreements are needed: A global pact under the UN umbrella to provide a further framework for implementation of the climate change goals and commitments and for financial engagements from development banks and funds, but also local pacts and agreements, per water basin and per metropolis."*

Creative solutions for sustainable agriculture under a changing climate necessarily carry water at their core: drought resistant crops, improved salt tolerance of different crop varieties, enriched seed varieties, developed cultivation practices such as conservation agriculture, improvements in soil organic carbon, organic practices. By sharing specialised experience and wisdom across the agricultural, hydro and energy arenas, climate-smart solutions have the potential to be three times as effective. And the most recurring factor in this equation is water dependency and vulnerability. *"Some of the smartest applications of sustainable farming come from countries and regions such as the south of Morocco or Pakistan, to name just a few, which are naturally poor in access to water from rainfall and riverbeds"*, comments James Dalton, Coordinator, Global Water Initiatives, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"Climate change impacts freshwater availability, but the greatest impact is made evident in how we manage precious resources. Water scarcity is not the only issue; mismanagement is. To this end, we need to tackle how water is distributed globally. Despite Brazil, to mention an example, being home to nearly one fifth of the world's fresh water, Sao Paulo, recently lived through one of the biggest crises in its history when it experienced an unparalleled drought. Furthermore, at this very moment, droughts are also being experienced across the world in places like the northern U.S., Australia and even China. In Puerto Rico, the opposite is true. Despite a horrific flood following a mega storm, less than half of the island's population had access to drinking water," highlights World Water Council President, Benedito Braga.

Infrastructure financing plays a crucial role in mitigating and adaptating to adverse effects of climate change. Access to funds for projects that make safe water available requires multilateral agreements and pooling financing from development banks, sovereign wealth and blue and green funds. *"Access to funds is a paradox for vital water-related projects that need to fulfil certain criteria to access the funds,"* comments Eric Tardieu, Technical Secretary, International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO). *"We need to match the market with investment needs. Furthermore, more analytical work is needed on the effects of non-investment,"* continues Torgny Holmgren, Executive Director, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI).

Collecting data is also a challenge for the global water community, which needs to share lessons and exploit technology in order to create a water-secure world. Value-added access to education about climate impacts, agriculture, energy and

water management would help generate new awareness among professionals and within institutions. Crucially, women's roles and experience must guide any implementation process. *"Involving both women and men in decision-making and integrated water resources initiatives leads to better sustainability, governance and efficiency. Women should be seen as key allies and a crucial element in sustainable behavioral change in climate adaptation,"* explains Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, President of Women for Water, World Water Council Member and spokesperson for the #ClimateIsWater Initiative.

Transition towards combined knowledge on agriculture, energy and water is necessary to secure food and nutrition, to maximise sustainable energy models, and to alleviate water stress. This is the only real response to climate change that can ensure water, food and energy in a sustainable climate-resilient world by 2050. Our food future is intertwined with our water future. And energy moves everything else. *"Indeed, the sustainable use of water for multiple purposes must remain a way of life and needs to be at the centre of building resilient cities or human settlements and ensuring food security in a climate change context,"* summarises Mariet Verhoef-Cohen.

"To further advance the water agenda with concrete answers to the current and future challenge of water security for peace and sustainable development will be the theme for the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar in 2021," shares Abdoulaye Sene, President of the National Organizing Committee for the 9th World Water Forum in 2021, which will take place in Senegal.

"*When I went to Ethiopia to adopt my son, I asked his biological mother why she was giving him up*," shares John Matthews, Coordinator and cofounder of the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA). "*Because I know there will come a day when I would have to decide who gets the last drop of water, him or me. And I want him to live."* If we don't join efforts and knowledge to mitigate and adapt to climate change, this is a choice all of humanity may one day face.

About the World Water Council:
The World Water Council (WWC) is an international multi-stakeholder platform organization, the founder and co-organizer of the World Water Forum. The World Water Council's mission is to mobilize action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making level, by engaging people in debate and challenging conventional thinking. The Council focuses on the political dimensions of water security, adaptation, and sustainability, and works to position water at the top of the global political agenda. Headquartered in Marseille, France, and created in 1996, the World Water Council brings together over 300 member organizations from more than 50 different countries. More on www.worldwatercouncil.org @wwatercouncil #wwatercouncil

About the #ClimateIsWater Initiative:
#ClimateIsWater is an international initiative for organizations acting for water and climate. The initiative came to fruition during COP21, coordinated by the World Water Council. The 63 #ClimateIsWater member organizations globally include among others, AGWA, SIWI, INBO, IUCN, the French Water Partnership, the Moroccan Ministry for Water, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNESCO, the French Water Academy, IWRA, Water Aid and Women for Water

Partnership. Its mission is to strengthen the position of water within the climate negotiations and the UNFCCC processes.

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