



Climate change is water change

The coming years, including the stocktaking in 2018, will be an important time to underpin water's key role to achieve the ambitions set out in the Paris Climate Agreement. For most Parties, water will be one of the key adaptation challenges of climate change. As the national plans (NDCs) currently do not suffice to meet the ambitions agreed upon in the Paris Agreement, the coming years will be important to build trust among parties and ensure that this gap is closed.

Water is a connector, not a sector – and it offers solutions | The impacts of climate change are most dramatically felt through changes in water - changes that will severely affect humans, society and the environment (IPCC 2013, 2014). According to the OECD Environmental Outlook, the global demand for freshwater will increase by 55 per cent between 2000 and 2050 (OECD, 2014). Given the pronounced global water scarcity, it is necessary to balance between competing water users while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Integrating water practice in regional, national and local mitigation and adaptation strategies and implementation will allow for coherence. Water is therefore a key to efficient operationalization of the Paris Agreement.

The next few years will be important to underpin water's key role to achieve the ambitions set out in the Paris Agreement. The National Determined Contributions (NDCs) are necessary but currently not sufficient to meet the agreement in the Paris Agreement on keeping the temperature in the atmosphere below 2 degree Celsius. It is now of utmost importance that trust is being built among parties to ensure that this gap is closed.

As stated in the NDCs submitted by parties to the UNFCCC Secretariat, water will be one of the key challenges to adapt to climate change.

Water is critical to climate change mitigation and for protecting ecosystems | Climate funding sources such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund will need to provide a coherent approach, ensuring that investments are com-

plementary and sufficiently allocated to address water challenges related to climate change effects.

Recommendations:

- Water must be mainstreamed and adequately addressed in the implementation of the NDCs.
- Given the frequent mention of water aspects in the NDCs, water should be adequately reflected in future policy decisions and climate finance.

The Global Climate Action Agenda is an important vehicle for collaboration | Non-state actors such as the private sector, NGOs/CSOs and research institutes can contribute greatly to implement efficient water-climate strategies and programmes, share information, raise awareness, as well as to mobilize support for the transition needed. The Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA) is an important vehicle for the development of new partnerships that will help build a more resilient and sustainable future for all, including the most vulnerable. Towards that end, it is essential that the GCAA is transparent in its governance, criteria selection, monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendations:

- The GCAA is a central initiative to connect different initiatives with the NDCs and to provide guidance to the UNFCCC secretariat on the organization of technical expert meetings (TEMs). It should also cooper-

ate with the UNFCCC Executive Secretary and the Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties, including the coordination of annual high-level events.

- Policies and institutions should facilitate and promote cooperation between all stakeholders, ensuring that the concerns of the most vulnerable groups are taken into consideration.

Water wise climate funding is a good investment for all | Climate funding sources such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund should address water challenges related to climate change effects.

Recommendations:

- Funding decisions and allocation of support should, in addition to their appraised impact on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, also be based on vulnerability assessments.
- It is important to strengthen the capacities of local stakeholders, including civil society, in order to facilitate access to the climate funds.
- New innovative funding sources, such as green bonds, are increasingly important. The development of water standards for green bonds reflects how private sector finance can integrate climate mitigation and adaptation and highlights the need for water knowledge for future investments in energy, manufacturing, ecological restoration, etc.

Sustainable water management is key to disaster risk reduction to combat loss and damage | The people most affected by the impacts of climate change are often the world's most vulnerable populations, particularly those living in Least Developed Countries. Hydro-climate disasters account for nearly 95 per cent of all people affected by disasters, and have caused more than 60 per cent of all damage incurred worldwide (UNISDR 2012). Extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, rising sea levels, changes in precipitation patterns, tropical cyclone strength and frequency, melting snow, ice and permafrost, and receding coastlines, all relate to water and exacerbate social and economic inequalities. Hydro-climate disasters impact ecosystems, infrastructure, cities, agriculture, and contribute to forced migration.

Recommendations:

- Given the gravity of water hazards, sustainable water management should be incorporated into the work plan of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

Global policies on climate change must be aligned with city action | Water is a connector in the city and water-wise cities contribute to achieve the global goals and agreements. The New Urban Agenda is a bold call to implement all global agreements at city scale. The newly launched Principles for water-wise cities are to guide cities to integrate water in city planning to achieve long term water security, livability, and low carbon, low resources, low impact services.

Almost half a billion urban residents live in coastal areas, vulnerable to storm surges and sea level rise. When cities are impacted by climate change, vulnerable infrastructure within water and energy supply systems become visible. Whether it is slow onset change or rapid transformation and hazards such as floods, the impacts of water-related risks on urban systems, including water systems, can be mitigated with a balance between green and grey infrastructure and ensuring the infrastructure includes flexibility and multiple options.

The success of innovative, climate smart cities relies to a great extent on people and good governance and preventing fragmented decision-making. The people of a city all contribute to ensure that cross-sector solutions required are achievable. Resilient urban water strategies can be put into practice through water-wise communities of end users, planning teams, policy makers, investors, local and central government.

Recommendation:

- Cities are key actors in implementing the Paris Agreement. Cities and local governments will be the main executor of adaptation and mitigation plans in many countries, and city leader's initiatives should therefore be part of any solution to achieve the national targets outlined in the NDCs.

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