WATER AT THE HEART OF THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE IN CITIES

#WATER #CLIMATE #CITIES #SDG11 #SDG6

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The members for the French Water Partnership are convinced by the transversality of the 2030 Agenda and the strong links that are found between the different Sustainable Development Objectives: in a context of climate change and population growth, the cities (SDG11) will not be able to manage if the rural exodus intensifies; and the challenges facing sustainable farming and agriculture (SDG 2) will not be able to ensure sustainable development if the countryside is continually confronted with the present tendency of shrinking farm and agricultural land. In addition, as explicitly proposed in the following note, SDG 6 on water and sanitation management is an essential condition for achievement of SDG2 and 11.

In 2030, 60% of the population will be living in cities and one person out of three in a city with more than 500,000 inhabitants according to the United Nations. The phenomenon of urbanization, **relatively balanced between large, medium-sized and small cities**, is going to increase essentially in developing and emerging countries, as countries in the Northern Hemisphere have already undergone their urban transition. In 2030, 12 out of 15 large megalopolis will be in the Southern hemisphere.

Many countries in developing countries are experiencing growth rates never seen before. This urban expansion often takes place in an uncontrolled manner and the challenge is therefore to integrate these unplanned zones into a broader, readapted urban policy.

The pressure on water resources along with the health risks associated with water are considerable in these dense, urban zones, and climate change only serves to exacerbate the situation. **Achieving SDG 11 therefore requires unfaltering awareness of water in all its different dimensions.**

In this context, the framework of international negotiations such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs set ambitious goals for equitable and universal access to water and sanitation, as well as management of major risks linked to water in cities. Even though numerous cities have already adopted **adaptation and mitigation strategies**, city decision-makers must continue to take measures to meet the challenges posed by water with which they are confronted.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO URBAN WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES

In a context of rapid urbanisation where water resources are increasingly put in peril, water must be at an affordable price and its associated services provided in an equitable manner to citizens.

A deliberate push for improvements to services provided to populations who are essentially deprived of them is necessary in conformity with SDG 11, without neglecting the robustness of services threatened by climate disruptions (droughts, degradation of water quality, salinisation of water in coastal areas), in particular for the most underprivileged populations (informal habitat systems in many cities and rural environments) which are especially vulnerable to the risks of disruptions of services and in particular the supply of uncontaminated water.

Numerous solutions to reduce water consumption (increase service efficiency, particularly reduction of leaks in the main system, user awareness, etc.) or to increase the amount of water available (recuperation of rainwater, recycling of waste water, etc.) are available. These must be developed within the more general framework of an integrated management at the basin level for sustainable resource allocation and protection of surface and ground water. In many urban contexts, the enormous investment and question marks over the sustainability of the resource require reflection on solutions outside the traditional centralised network framework. Faced with the diversity of inhabited areas, planned or otherwise, and in line with principles of equity and equalisation on the scale of a conurbation, alternatives, sometimes arising from the populations themselves, must be considered in order to improve accessibility to services for everyone throughout the region, particularly for the most modest-income households.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

REINFORCE THE RESILIENCE OF CITIES TO MAJOR RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH WATER

In addition, cities are especially vulnerable to climate risks associated with water (floods, droughts, the rise in the sea level, hurricanes and tornadoes...). Within this context, in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of cities, it is necessary to rethink **urban planning and design** by orientating reflection towards the development of urbanization in relation to the occupation of their catchment area (suburbs, upstream rural and natural environments) and their internal rules of construction.

The development of **"sponge cities",** in which rainwater absorption and runoff is facilitated by means of **depermeabilisation**, a good **balance between gray infrastructures and solutions based on nature**, the **development of new green spaces and roof gardens**, as well as other advances introduced at a plot level to help limit or slow down runoff in rainy spells, all merit encouragement. These green infrastructures entail co-benefits for the quality of life in the city, for example the fight against heat islands.

Moreover, actors must work together to design an **"intelligent"** and more **decentralized city**, favouring **powerful and efficient synergies between urban services** for water management, sanitation, waste and energy.

WATER IN THE CITY: POTENTIAL MITIGATION

With the aim of pushing city development towards a carbon-neutral balance, all water and sanitation operators can implement very simple actions to affirm their **energetic efficiency**, for example by upgrading equipment with higher performance systems. The logic of a **circular economy** offers important opportunities too, in particular in terms of financial and human benefits. The potential valorization of urban waste water (for example, nutrients transported by waste water, carbon, azote and phosphorous) is an under-exploited resource. With carbon-based energy production, sanitation has excellent prospects for energy self-sufficiency and effectively contributing to a reduction of regional greenhouse gas emissions.

GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, KEY TOOLS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE IN CITIES

Changing people's behaviour, the **participation and training of all key actors** and **progressive regulatory frameworks (urban adaptation and mitigation plans) extended to the catchment areas** and **social acceptance** are core stages for city adaptation to climate change. This open-mindedness and culture of dialogue have, as their corollary, the **sharing of information**, **commitment to transparency** and **international cooperation between cities.**

Regional planning must also take into account local realities based on the three scales of development (small, medium-sized and large city). The very high population growth in certain areas calls for integration of informal development into the urban fabric. Moreover, **Urban Climate and Energy Plans** must necessarily incorporate a chapter on Water, which is not generally the case at present.

The **mobilization of financial resources** is a major issue in city initiatives against climate disruption. Local authorities are partly responsible for social, economic and environmental investment in their region, which can represent between 50% and 60% of public investment spending. Nevertheless, in many developing countries, they are very poorly equipped to promote development or finance dispositions in the long term. The **strengthening of their financial state of health and management skills** therefore goes hand in hand with the mobilization of long-term funding, which will be based on the **3T** principle (taxes, tariffs, transfers).

ABOUT THE FWP

The French Water Partnership, presided by the former deputy Jean Launay, is the reference international platform for all the french water stakeholders, whether public or private, with activities at the international level. Its 150 members are gathered into 6 colleges representing the whole french water landscape : State and public estabilshments, NGOs, associations and foundations, local and regional authorities, businesses, research and training institutes, as well as qualified experts. The FWP has been acting for 10 years to make water a top priority in the worldwide political agenda, and promoting the French know-how.

http://www.partenariat-francais-eau.fr/en/

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