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# APE and Eau de Paris Seminar | "Water and Climate"

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Aqua Publica Europea

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**A wide-ranging audience of institutional representatives, experts, NGOs and other environmental stakeholders attended the seminar "Water and Climate", organised by APE and Eau de Paris, which was held on the 16th of October in the Paris' town hall (Hôtel de Ville).**

The seminar included two sessions gathering scientific experts, institutional representatives and practitioners. The first session explored the impact of climate change on water resources; the second, a series of examples of initiatives carried out by public water operators to tackle the challenge of climate change and its impact on water. At the end of the seminar, a [common publication collecting APE member's best practices in the protection of water resources was presented.](#)

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In her introductory remarks, **Célia Blauel**, Deputy-Mayor of Paris and President of Eau de Paris and Aqua Publica Europea, highlighted the major impact that climate change will have on water quantity and quality. Consequently, she called for **putting water on the centre stage in international climate talks** and she urged the international community to adopt a **conductive reference framework for effective water resources protection**. She also emphasised that the response to the current and upcoming challenges has to be a multi-level one. In this framework, local responses will have a major role to play in mitigating climate change, also relying on water operators' know-how and expertise.

She also reminded the audience that challenges are not just financial and technical. As a common good, the problems affecting water resources concern a wide range of stakeholders and therefore the **solutions need to be built on a broad consensus**. Thanks to its public ownership nature, the public water management model is better suited to propose long term solutions, based on participate governance.

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Introducing the **first session on "Water and Climate, a Common Destiny"**, **Blanca Jiménez Cisneros**, Director of the UNESCO Division of Water Sciences, drew a comprehensive picture of the **key challenges facing water security in this century**. These include water-related disasters and hydrological change, lower groundwater

recharge, increased use of aquifers and other issues related to water scarcity and quality, all addressed through the UNESCO Intergovernmental Scientific Cooperative Programme in Hydrology and Water Resources. Ms Jiménez Cisneros also highlighted the importance of international cooperation to tackle transboundary water security issues, in which water utilities have a crucial role to play.

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**Sébastien Abis**, Principal Administrator of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) highlighted how **water scarcity and food security challenges are deeply intertwined**, especially in Mediterranean countries. In this framework, agriculture has a key role to play in promoting innovative solutions that lead to sustainable food production. Such solutions should rely on local knowledge, and will have to integrate environmental sustainability considerations with socio-economic needs, based on the concept of "human security".

**Corinne Trommsdorff**, Programme Manager of the International Water Association, focused on the **impact that climate change has on urban water** and presented the solutions that utilities can put in place. These solutions include diversifying the supply through holistic water cycle planning, minimising the dependency on resources through the "5R" principles (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, replenish) and championing the integration of water in urban design to reduce risks and unlock co-benefits.

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**Geert Decock**, Director EU Affairs of the NGO Food and Water Watch, highlighted the **mutually reinforcing effects generated by climate change and water stress phenomena**, the latter being often exacerbated by industrial activities, including fracking. He called for water being put at the centre of international negotiations by favouring models of food and energy production that do not harm water, the consideration of the impact on water of trade agreements and the promotion of watershed protection measures and prevention of eutrophication.

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Introducing the **second session on "Taking Action for the Protection of Water Resources"**, **Aziza Akhmouch**, Head of the OECD Water Governance Programme, explained that **water is a crucial factor for economic development** and that it is **not just an issue for developing, but also developed countries**. Ms Akhmouch underlined the need of engaging stakeholders outside the water sector and stressed the importance that transparency, including on who pays for what, holds for effective governance. In this regard, she recalled the principles of governance for the water sector that were recently adopted by the OECD.

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**Paul Rush**, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection of New York City, presented the city's **Watershed Protection Programme**, which allows New York to provide high-quality water to citizens and preserve this quality through effective upstream approaches based on partnerships with farmers, land acquisition, infrastructure, and watershed regulations. However, Mr Rush also emphasised the risks that the system is increasingly exposed to, due to climate change.

**Eva Sailer**, Head of Department of Augsburg Wasser, presented the water operators' **successful cooperation programme with farmers**, based on advice, financial incentives and the control of fields, soil and groundwater. This has led to ever decreasing nitrate values and a water free from pesticides and metabolites. She also underlined the need for a legislative framework allowing decisions to be taken directly by the water supplier.

**Samir Bensaïd**, Director of the Morocco International Institute for Water and Sanitation, confirmed that the **protection of water resources requires partnerships with multiple stakeholders**, especially the agriculture sector. The conservation of water resources and knowledge-sharing are essential elements of an effective water protection strategy. These elements, requiring a long-term vision, are easier to achieve for public water operators, who are not conditioned by short-term profit-making necessities. On the same line than Mr Abis, he also underlined the importance of context-based innovation based on local knowledge.

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**Lynn Boylan**, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur for the European Citizen's Initiative "Right to water", concluded the seminar by thanking APE for its support in the fight for the right to water and explained the background of the adoption of the EP report on the ECI "Right2Water". She underlined the **strong link between social aspects (accessibility) and environmental dimensions** made by the resolution and the need to reconcile the two aspects also through a fairer participation in cost recovery of different societal uses of the water resources.

The seminar ended with the presentation of the publication *Water and Climate: European Public Water Operator's Commitment to Water Resources Protection*. This publication presents a series of best practices of APE's members

with regard to the protection of water resources.

To read more about the publication, visit [this page](#).

