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Presented by the French Water Partnership (FWP) and the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)

This session, moderated by Maylis Castaignet, Seine Normandy Partnership, centered on the role of nature-based solutions for water and adaptation to climate change focusing on the interlinkages of water, biodiversity, and climate change.

Ramsar Senior Advisor for Europe, Tobias Salathé represented the Ramsar Convention at the roundtable discussion.

Jean Launay, President, French Water Partnership, recalled the UN resolution establishing a new Decade in support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which aims at integrated management of water resources. He noted the strategic importance of 2018, when the Decade will start.

In a keynote speech, James Dalton, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), spoke on the work of his organization related to nature-based solutions. He said that over 70 years, IUCN has been committed to protect the environment and stressed the human dependency on healthy ecosystems. Dalton noted major transboundary benefits of functional habitats and recalled that water is not mentioned in the Paris Agreement, suggesting COP 23 focus more on this issue. He added that policy frameworks exist but poor communication and institutional weaknesses remain key challenges for mainstreaming solutions on sustainable development.

Aurélie Lhume, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), highlighted the links between the SDGs, water and land protection. She defended multisector approaches to tackle water issues, saying that political reforms to improve water management are urgently needed. Lhume concluded that the water deficit requires political will and larger investments from all countries. On land degradation and drought, she said that the UNCCD is developing new tools to support parties to identify implementation gaps.

Tobias Salathe, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, spoke on tools to protect wetlands, saying that they were identified as vulnerable areas in the 1960s. He stressed that, since 1971, the world loses 1% of wetlands yearly, emphasizing the importance of wetlands as carbon sinks and water reservoirs.
Jean-Luc François, French Development Agency (AFD), highlighted the economic trajectory of our societies, which has affected nature dangerously, and called for reviewing economic and investment models to reverse the current unsuitable patterns of development. He emphasized the role of development agencies to positively influence more sustainable development patterns.

Adama Doulkom, Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel (IGMVSS), Burkina Faso, provided the background of his initiative, noting the similarities between the challenges faced by countries suffering from drought. He explained that the exchange of best practices among IGMVSS member countries stimulated regional solutions, noting productivity gains after ecosystems were restored. He called for better synergies in Africa and recommended focusing on better practices regarding tenure security.

During concluding remarks, Jean-François Donzier, Executive Secretary, Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (Alliance4Water), called the audience to “act” and declared that mobilization and implementation of known solutions is the most important response to dangerous nature degradation. He closed the meeting, inviting participants to sign the International Declaration on “Nature-Based Solutions for Water Management Under Climate Change,” to be presented on 10 November at COP 23.

In the ensuing debate, participants discussed, inter alia, traditional knowledge and the role of farmers in the promotion of nature-based solutions; methods to share best practices; and links between oceans and climate change.

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