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Initiative: Eau CEO meets with Ambassador of Burkina Faso to the United Nations

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, U.S.A. – Chief Executive Officer of Initiative: Eau Donald Brooks met with Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yemdaogo Eric TIARÉ on 24 May 2019 at Burkina Faso’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. During the meeting, Brooks presented Initiative: Eau, its mission, and its activities to the Ambassador with the intent of strengthening relations and exploring opportunities for collaboration with the Permanent Mission.

During the meeting, Brooks expressed Initiative: Eau’s support of the progress made by the Government of Burkina Faso and its partners in the sectors of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), while noting enduring areas for improvement. Notably, Brooks stressed the importance of water quality and of closing safe access gaps for disadvantaged populations, including the urban poor and marginalized ethnicities.

“The United Nations Joint Monitoring Program definition of ‘improved water access’ does not mention water quality. The quality of water served to populations, however, has enormous effects on public health and when improperly controlled can represent a veritable public health risk,” said Brooks. “As such, we believe it is imperative for the Government of Burkina Faso to include water quality considerations into its national water access statistics. Otherwise, it may be reported that a large percentage of the population has access to an ‘improved water source,’ while in fact these improved water sources may be serving contaminated water.”

Given Initiative: Eau’s primary target zone of Burkina Faso’s Est region, one of the newest theaters of violent militant activity in the country, the tenuous security situation was also a topic of discussion. Brooks highlighted the direct impact of rising violent extremism on the organization’s capacity to conduct its programming. While emphasizing the organization’s neutrality as a non-governmental organization, Brooks emphasized the importance of basic service provision and critical infrastructures in preventing new radicalization.

“To really prevent further radicalization and the further spread of violent extremism, we must continue to invest in the basic services and critical infrastructures that these affected regions lack. Both humanitarian and development efforts must continue to not only address the crisis situations in the Sahel and the Est, but also to prevent at-risk regions from following the same path. The global community must react. Without attention paid to these crucial structural changes, the response to the current security situation in Burkina risks missing the point,” said Brooks.

Granted Special Consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2017, Initiative: Eau engages in high-level advocacy at the United Nations. At last year’s High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July, Initiative: Eau advocated its data-driven and evidence-based

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approach to drinking water service development, with a specific focus on water quality, during the global progress review of Sustainable Development Goal 6.

About Initiative: Eau

Initiative: Eau is an American 501(c)3 non-profit, non-governmental organization whose mission is to increase the safety and quality of drinking water services in developing urban areas. The organization currently conducts programming in Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Its vision is a world where everyone has access to safe drinking water. Initiative: Eau is in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Initiative: Eau's approach is human-centered, and data-driven. As such, data represents a common thread that links its programs. Each uses data and evidence-based methodologies to affect change whereby rendering available financial and human resources better targeted and more effective.