

1st Cairo Water Week

Opening Ceremony-

Mr Loic Fauchon, Honorary President of the World Water Council

Mr Prime Minister,

Mr Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation,

Mrs and Mr Ministers and Ambassadors

Dear Friends of Water,

It is a great honor to deliver this speech in front of you, on behalf of the World Water Council, in the opening ceremony of the 1st Cairo Water Week. And on behalf of our Council, I would like to thank you for your invitation.

And I would like to congratulate the Egyptian government for this initiative and especially my friend Mr Mohamed Abdel Ati, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation.

I am honored but it is also a great pleasure to meet you again, dear colleagues from Egypt and from so many countries, to be here on the bank of the river Nile where the World Water Council was born some 25 years ago, due to the enlarged vision of Mahmoud Abu Zeid to whom I address my greetings and my feelings of consideration.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world is now facing multiple crises. Political crisis, diplomatic crisis, money and financial crisis, health and food crisis.

And lately climate and environment crisis.

Water, like energy, are both at the heart of all these crises. Because water and energy are indispensable for the development of mankind as well as for the respect of dignity of every human being.

Our responsibility is overwhelming to guarantee to our populations proper water resources now, and in the future.

In other words, we must secure water for today and for tomorrow. Make sure that water is guaranteed for our children and grandchildren.

It means also securing water quality for all needs and types of use.

In a few words, we must guarantee access to water everywhere, for us all and by us all.

You certainly know it, we all know it here, water, which is source of life, is threatened.

And not only by climate evolution, because, my dear friends, we must stop hiding the errors and mistakes of mankind behind climate change.

Here and everywhere in the world, the growing demographic pressure is the number one problem. The absurd increasing growth of cities is making a huge pressure on water resources. Megalopolis are modern time monsters.

And their situations along big rivers and on sea coasts create even worse difficulties and more responsibilities.

During the next few years and the next decades we will have only one preoccupation, one single obsession, one major priority :

Water security.

And this major priority is made of two inseparable and complementary elements :

First of all, water resources, that we must protect, increase, diversify, secure and transfer near the human settlements where they are expected and essential.

Then, water treatment and distribution, and consequently depollution and purification to give it back to natural environment with respect for biodiversity and protection of ecosystems.

Water for mankind but also water for nature.

It is not only a duty but a permanent and global obligation for the planet.

Create more water resources and avoid wasting it. Increase the efficiency of every water drop.

We can reach it if we know how to consolidate the basement of the “House of Water” with the construction of its three main pillars : Knowledge, Governance, Finance.

Knowledge is based on multiplication and circulation of technological and digital solutions.

Governance is the capacity to make different levels of institutions dialogue together, the State, the basins, local authorities, the civil society, in order to organize well balanced public water services.

Finance is the ability to allow investments whose costs are most adapted to services in the poorest countries or regions.

This should be our main purpose : knowing, governing, financing water for today and for tomorrow, water for Humans and for Nature.

THIS IS OUR CHALLENGE.

This what is expected for the next few years : real water policies, at international, national and local levels.

Policies which are commitments.

Sustainable and long-term commitments for water in laws and budgets.

A future with smartphones and tablets, why not my dear friends, but water and sanitation it's a lot better !

And what appears to be true for the whole planet is even more accurate here, in the Mediterranean region, and near, in the Middle East and Africa.

The Mediterranean is the birthplace of our civilization but we left our natural resources unprotected. Our common sea is a receiver from all activities generated by men. As I have often mentioned, our obligations for the future are summed up in a few words but many actions : we have a common sea to protect and lands to water.

Ladies and gentlemen, Fresh water and ocean waters, it is the same fight !

The protection of the Mediterranean sea requires a special status.

The Mediterranean sea is worth a Common Treaty between all neighbouring countries.

A treaty to limit the huge pollutions that are progressively murdering it.

Agriculture and industrial waste water, unauthorized touristic areas, fuel oil spilling due to sea traffic, evergrowing plastic wastes...

As recently published, there will soon be as many plastic as fish in our nourishing sea.

Ladies and gentlemen, time when every one is working on his own is over. Time is now to be gathering for sharing.

Two proposals to progress in this direction :

The first one is about the systematic approach of Integrated Water Management which has been promoted by the water community for a few decades. A vertical approach, appropriate, but too restrictive today, which isolates and reduces the solutions for water only to the hydraulic aspect.

During the next few years we will complement the vertical approach by a horizontal approach.

Water is a link, water is a conductor, as is energy, to support the economic development and the protection of nature.

We advocate for a Five Fingers Alliance which gets together and unites water, energy, food, health and education.

The second proposal is about taking into account tensions and water related conflicts.

When there are use conflicts, Hydrodiplomacy is a better way to reach equitable sharing of water while preserving peace.

Hydrodiplomacy is before traditional diplomacy. It is supported and conducted by the international water community. It is based on knowledge and internal relationships between members of the big water family. It often allows to untie disputes before they become conflicts between states.

Hydrodiplomacy is, and will continue to be, a major priority of the action of the World Water Council.

Dear friends of water, you see, shared knowledge, decentralized governance, reinforced financing, anticipated disasters, horizontal management, adapted laws, increased budgets, implemented hydrodiplomacy . It is the expected political action that we must impose.

Yes, I am saying “impose”, at all levels of the political debate.

It is the only condition to bring answers that populations are expecting from us all over the world.

These populations, more educated, more informed, know that we have the technical, financial, institutional solutions. They also know that the solutions are very often kept in our ministries, our companies, our universities, our organizations, because it is costless and more comfortable.

Dear colleagues of Egypt, dear participants to the 1st Cairo Water Week, we need your great experience, we need your personal involvement to be part of this challenge and I thank you again for gathering us during the water week.

The challenge of the three preparation years to the 9th World Water Forum that the World Water Council organizes with our Senegalese colleagues and which will be held in Dakar in 2021, will be to go from solutions to answers, from invention to implementation, from offices to ground sites, all things that will give a meaning and credibility to our daily action.

Come with us, follow us on the road to Dakar, on the road to access to water, and let us bring answers to the poorest, the weakest populations, for solidarity and human dignity.

