

Speech Mayor of Marseille
Jean-Claude GAUDIN
Opening of the World Water Forum
Monday 12 march 2012

Mr Prime Minister,
Highnesses,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers and Ambassadors, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Marseille is proud as I, too, am proud, to welcome you today, you who come from every continent and even the most distant countries of the world.

Marseille and its people are proud of the honour that the world grants to us by accepting our invitation to meet in our city to advance, together, a cause that is as vital as that of water.

The choice you have made in selecting Marseille to host the work of the 6th World Water Forum constitutes an acknowledgement, for our history, for our culture and for the requirement that is ours, every day, for water and for the service of people.

Your choice, moreover, reflects the core values within which the solutions we shall express throughout this week must be based if we want them to be truly effective and sustainable.

In Marseille, we know, having for centuries suffered because of it, what a lack of water means. And there is absolutely no need to read the works of a native son, the famous writer Marcel Pagnol, for this historical truth to be etched into our collective unconscious.

We are also aware, for us to follow the historical continuity of local decision-makers, both visionary and determined, of the requirement for infrastructure to provide efficient water distribution and services. And there is no need either to emphasise to you that its realisation owes everything to resolute political will and major financial commitments.

We know, for having experienced it, the contentment brought about by water, when it is available in sufficient quantity and quality, to collective health, economic development and the quality of people's daily lives.

And we know, for having read it in the eyes of children, victims of tragic events and having heard it in the voices of their countries' decision-makers what solidarity means, something our city and its professionals have demonstrated in many circumstances...

Yes, Mr Prime Minister, Distinguished Heads of State, Highnesses, Excellencies, the choice of Marseille is both symbolic and exemplary to demonstrate concretely that the time for water solutions has arrived...

Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council which he has managed to have recognised as "*the voice of water*" right around the globe, readily admits that "*the time of easy water is over*".

The spoken text shall prevail

This Council has its headquarters in Marseille. It was our wish and we have fought for it to be set up here. And it is an honour for us to support, day by day, the growth of this young organisation which, within the space of fifteen years, has established itself internationally and has been able to organise gatherings of this size and this ambition. So I say here emphatically: we will continue because, I admit, this Council is just a little ours and because I sit on it myself with pride and happiness...

Yes, the time of easy water, is over for some countries. Yes, the time of easy water is ending for some parts of the world – and everyone should finally be aware of this.

But allow me to say that my wish and that your hope and that our duty to all today is firstly that the time of difficult water should be finally over for those billions of men and women who lack it, for those children in huge mega-cities who die because of diseases caused by poor water quality or poor or absent sanitation.

After the founding Forums of Marrakesh and the Hague, after the global awareness given to the water cause begun in Kyoto and then the assertion of a right to water and sanitation for all from the Mexico Forum, after the establishment of the Istanbul Water Consensus which emphasises the critical role of local authorities in water management, the Marseille meeting means we have a duty to provide concrete and sustainable solutions to the challenges of this time.

The time for solutions, yes, means we must meet the challenges that climate change, irresistible urban growth, population growth, the depletion of a resource subject to ever increasing pollution and uncontrolled consumption, inequalities between rich and poor and disparities between dry and wet regions throw at us together.

Since we, the people of Marseille, must assume our vocation of world water capital, before you, on behalf of Marseille, I will make three commitments. The first concerns our water consumption, the second our wastewater discharges at sea and the third the protection of people and property against flooding. I will have the opportunity to develop these commitments more widely that will be added to the dozens of solutions that our city will be putting forward throughout the Forum.

Thank you.

The spoken text shall prevail