



MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES ET EUROPÉENNES

6th World Water Forum

Marseille, 13th of March 2012

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MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

OPENING REMARKS

Vice President,

Ministers,

Representatives of international organizations,

Ambassadors,

President of the International Committee for the World
Water Forum,

President of the World Water Council,

Participants of the World Water Forum in Marseille,

It is with great pleasure that I open this plenary session of the ministerial conference of the 6th World Water Forum, which France wanted to hold here in Marseille in partnership with the local and regional authorities of the city of Marseille, the Bouches-du-Rhône *département* and the Provence-Alpes-Côte



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d'Azur region, and with the World Water Council. I should also like to thank all those who have made this Forum possible and all of you for participating today.

Water challenges are massive, which is why we wanted this Forum to be a “time for solutions”. Rather than dissecting the problems, I think we need to come up with solutions to them and take on our responsibilities to engage in moving forward, extremely aware that urgent action is needed. Indeed, we cannot live without water. It is key to development, to growth and to peace.

The fact that so many of you have made the effort to attend this Forum on behalf of your governments means that you share my belief that governments have an essential role to play in addressing these challenges, defining guidelines, promoting new instruments and providing all stakeholders with the means they need to take action.

With this in mind, France, and more specifically the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in charge of this ministerial process, has aimed to establish a strong political process in which governments have been able to be involved in two interrelated activities which are coming together today:



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high-level roundtables this morning and the drafting of a ministerial declaration.

These two activities were conducted in a spirit of open-mindedness and participation seen throughout the Forum and brought together international organizations and representatives from civil society, non-governmental development, environmental and humanitarian organizations, the business community and trade unions, young people, women and indigenous peoples, working in a new and innovative feature of the Forum, the “grassroots and citizenship” process. We think this is a very positive process since multi-stakeholder dialogue is key to good water governance and governments need to listen to other stakeholders and their fellow citizens.

The political process then incorporated work conducted in the thematic and regional processes on strategic priorities and conditions for success defined for the Marseille Forum. This morning’s roundtable themes and the ministerial declaration therefore reflect the main issues, solutions and commitments that should mobilize governments. Some concern more specifically each of the major regions of the Forum, which are Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Mediterranean



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and Arab countries with their specific geographic, social and economic features. Regional sessions in the days ahead will be integrated with this ministerial conference.

In preparation of the Forum, the interactions of the three political segments (governments, parliaments and local and regional authorities) were also stressed. Again, it will be important during the rest of the week to structure the framework for solutions and the commitments to draft and implement water and sanitation policies: first, in regional dialogues bringing together ministers, parliamentary members and local and regional authorities and focused on specific themes decided by each region; and then, during the conference of local and regional authorities and the parliamentary conference.

The Marseille Forum should make a decisive contribution to the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which is to be held from 20 to 22 June 2012. In this respect, today is extremely important because we are going to discuss the same themes that will be discussed at Rio+20. It is now our duty to ensure that they are heard and addressed so that water becomes an important issue on the international political agenda.



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Countries and groups of countries volunteered to address specific themes in the roundtables. I would like to thank them and I look forward to hearing their rapporteurs share the solutions and commitments that will be proposed. Now if I may, I want to stress the three points of the ministerial declaration that I consider to be particularly important with respect to Rio+20.

1. Much more needs to be done to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, but we need to go beyond that because access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a right for all. This is what the Marseille ministerial declaration says based on the United Nations' recognition of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. The challenge is now to accelerate the actual implementation of this right. Because universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation should be targeted over the long term. This aim should be translated into an innovative, broader and integrated view of sanitation, for the health and well-being of everyone.

2. Water should be at the core of the green economy in a context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. With this in mind, water, energy and food security policies need to be more coordinated because these sectors are in constant



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interaction. It is impossible to feed the world and generate wealth without concern for the conservation of water resources, their quality and their availability for various uses.

3. Lastly, we need to think about the post-2015 period and move forward to include water in a framework for governance, financing and cooperation building on progress made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Starting in Rio, the international community will have to put forward proposals about this issue, and we will be able to draw on the solutions from the Marseille Forum. I would like to add that the year 2013, which has been declared the International Year of Water Cooperation, will be an excellent opportunity to strengthen all kinds of water cooperation and governance. In this regard, you know how committed France is to international cross-border water instruments.

Thank you.