



WORLD WATER FORUM (Marseille, 12-17 March 2012)

Commitments by the French Government

The 6th World Water Forum is "**the time for solutions.**" France, as a co-organizer of the forum, will make commitments both at the level of government and of the various other actors who participated in the preparatory processes established by the International Committee of the Forum.

France wants to be exemplary. The commitments it has taken are commensurate with the general, cross-cutting priority which, for several years, it has placed on sustainable development, as illustrated by the innovative approach of the Grenelle Roundtable¹.

These commitments address two priorities set by the President of the Republic at the launch of the preparatory work sessions of the Marseille Forum:

- **Firstly, the concrete implementation of "right to water and sanitation"** recognized in 2010 by the United Nations, as number of deaths related to unsafe water and the proportion of mankind without access to these essential services are staggering (over one billion people worldwide drink water that could harm their health and some 2 billion people have no toilets). Water is a vital need. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have stated it bluntly. A precondition of development, water is also a precondition of stability and peace. One course of action, therefore, should reach two main goals;

- **Then, "put water at the heart of policy, all policies"**, ensuring it is a resource that is both protected and shared. This cross-cutting approach is of fundamental importance. It underlies the discussions conducted around the "green economy". In this regard, the economic difficulties we are experiencing in financial terms should not distract us from strategic objectives related to sustainable development. Measures that help prepare the future also help to better cope with crises: job creation in sectors related to environmental technologies, reducing wastefulness, improved management of natural resources, etc.

Water is at the heart of key development issues: health and child mortality, nutrition, fight against poverty and economic development, but also gender equality, energy, the environment

¹ The "Grenelle" Environment Roundtable is the name given to a consultative process launched in 2007 by the French government, which led to a series of commitments by various stakeholders as well as government in various sectoral areas related to sustainable development.

at large, etc. One can probably assume that all MDGs imply dealing with water issues.

These two fundamental aspects, the fight against poverty and access to essential services, on the one hand, and finding an economic model that is less water-intensive and more respectful of the water resource, on the other hand, must be complemented by an **awareness of the major challenge to mankind posed by climate change**. Particularly vulnerable countries must adapt to the consequences of this change, in which water is a major point of concern.

France acts within its territory, but also within Europe and internationally, particularly through cooperation in the field of water, according to **geographic priorities, chief among which are sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean**.

Finally, the Marseille Forum should contribute to ongoing international discussions, in particular in preparation for the Rio + 20, **towards improved international environmental governance and sustainable development**. Water governance in the broadest sense means the international architecture, but also the organization at local level, especially at watershed level. Finally, it must be based on increased exchanges amongst the water community and a substantial effort in terms of information and training.

The document includes, in several thematic or geographical chapters, the main lines of governmental action in the field of water, accompanied by a number of commitments arising from policies implemented in recent years, both nationally (in the framework of the Grenelle Environment Roundtable, for example) and internationally, particularly with regard to our cooperation policy. These commitments are not exhaustive, but an exemplary illustration, each in its field, of the focus on universal access to water and sanitation as well as to the sustainable management and shared resource.

Most commitments include the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, the year of the 7th World Water Forum. There are two types of commitments: commitments that the government can implement on the French territory or with its own resources and competencies, and commitments that require the cooperation of French or foreign partners, for which the commitment is on providing means rather than on specific results. The material and human resources related to implementation of these commitments have been programmed. Their implementation will be detailed in the monitoring mechanism set up by the government at the level of the two main departments concerned, namely the Ministry of Ecology and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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ENSURING THE WELFARE OF ALL, PROMOTING HUMAN HEALTH: ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE WATER AND SANITATION

Access to safe water and sanitation is a prerequisite to the very possibility of individuals and countries developing. The "right to water" has been recognized by the United Nations. Its concrete expression requires the mobilization of all.

France, which seeks to be exemplary on its territory, already provides the "right to water", whose legal force has recently been strengthened through the establishment of a domestic solidarity mechanism, on 1 January 2012, on access to safe drinking water for poor populations. This is complemented by the aid given by the water agencies to local communities for the homeless or for travelers.

Along with internal solidarity, international solidarity must be strengthened at various levels. Nationally, more effort is needed to improve sanitation.

I) MORE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY FOR ENFORCING THE "RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION"

→ **Increase the proceeds of French international solidarity mechanism** (Thiollère and Oudin-Santini Legislative Acts), by increased mobilization of local authorities in charge, for a doubling by 2015, thanks to the leverage of additional aid provided by water agencies

→ **Promote abroad the mechanisms of international solidarity among non-state actors**, on the basis of the European Parliament's resolution in favor of the "1% solidarity" and the UNDP charter on decentralized solidarity mechanisms for water and sanitation

→ **Improve our ability to cope with emergencies**: enhancing the operational and financial capabilities of our country, whether for prevention, response to emergencies, but also through better coordination with the reconstruction phase, in connection with the French humanitarian NGOs and consistent with the strategies developed by the European Union and the United Nations

→ **Implement, together with civil society and local government partners, a "volunteers for water" initiative**: its aim is to sustain the momentum of youth engagement through the system set up by France's civic service agency, and on the basis of projects for international water solidarity

II) AT NATIONAL LEVEL, A PRIORITY EFFORT ON SANITATION

→ **Complete the infrastructure building effort on collective sanitation**, using money appropriated for solidarity between basins to close the gap with the overseas departments and Corsica

→ **Improve the non collective sewerage facilities and their management** by a significant increase in efforts undertaken under the 10th intervention program of the Water Agencies (2013-2018)

→ **Adapt sanitation systems to meet new pollution sources**, notably through the French plan on micro-pollutants, emphasizing reduction at source and monitoring of emerging pollution sources, particularly drug residues

PROMOTING A "GREEN ECONOMY" THROUGH THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

The Marseille Forum is an important step on the road to Rio, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development scheduled for June 2012, as it addresses the topic of "green economy" and therefore the issue of better water management and, in general, that of mainstreaming water issues into public policies. Main concerns are the preservation and protection of the resource and its more rational and efficient management, responding to an objective of "non resource intensive growth." Work and discussions around the water-energy-food security nexus, in particular, should lead us to take into account interactions with the two sectors that consume the bulk of water resources, namely agriculture and energy, as well

as technological innovation, including ecological engineering. France must implement these objectives as far as it is concerned while making proposals at the international level.

I) DOMESTICALLY, PROMOTE ECO-TECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

→ **Increase the resources devoted to environmental technologies** at the national level, through increased mobilization of competitiveness clusters on water issues, as well as through water agencies and ONEMA (the National Water and Aquatic Environments Office), creating a division dedicated to overseas territories within the "network of clusters"

→ **In terms of fees, support the proposals made by the water agencies**, with the consent of basin committees in order to change the current system towards stronger incentives for water-saving practices and environmental quality preservation

→ **Increase network performance in France (and adopt procedures to measure it) through better management of water for energy and energy for water:** improving performance in terms of water collection and consumption at power plants, saving energy in access to safe water and sanitation services, and recovering energy from municipal wastewater. Establish by 2015 a review of measures taken in this context.

→ **Encourage more efficient management of water resources for agriculture, reduce pollution:** improve performance of irrigation systems, promote wastewater reuse in agriculture, efficient resource management, including by adopting practices, crops or varieties that are more efficient in case these measures are inadequate, consider the development of water storage; reduce pesticide use 50% by 2018 (Plan Ecophyto)

→ **Encourage the protection of water catchment feeding areas**, by encouraging least polluting patterns of land uses, especially sustainable agriculture on these surfaces, starting with organic crops for which a 2020 target of 20% of all farmland has been set.

II) AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND CONSISTENCY BETWEEN WATER AND SECTORAL POLICIES

→ **Strengthening the "FASEP-green innovation"** tool by doubling the number of French technology demonstrators on water in emerging countries by 2015

→ **Food safety: Ensure the implementation of commitments made in the G20** on integration of water issues, particularly in the development of principles for responsible investment in agriculture

→ **Seek, with donor support, a better integration of the impact of sectoral policies and projects on the water resource:** upstream of projects, generalize the use of impact studies, promote integrated approaches (coordination of sectoral approaches, stakeholder consultation, co-existence of uses, etc.), encourage the establishment of mechanisms for dialogue and arbitrage between administrations.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN : TWO PRIORITIES FOR FRENCH COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF WATER

With the adoption of the Evian Action Plan, the 2003 announcement of the plan to double French foreign aid to this sector, and with its experience at domestic level, France has made water and sanitation one of its international priorities. The water issue cuts across all its cooperation priorities: health, education, food security and, more broadly, sustainable development. In this context, through the efforts of the AFD (French Development Agency), France attaches particular importance to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. After quadrupling its development assistance in these areas over the past decade, it will continue its international efforts by giving a strong priority to sanitation.

Technical solutions, which are well known, must be implemented based on a partnership and multi-player approach. As an area traditionally left behind in water policies, sanitation should be given more attention by policy makers, because its absence or poor organization has a high human and financial cost. In total, according to the UN, every dollar invested has an average return on investment of about \$ 8.

The priority on Sub-Saharan Africa will be maintained. It is justified by persistent gaps in access to safe water and sanitation. Technical issues and policies related to the rise of water stress and pollution in the Mediterranean led to expand the scope of interventions, both under technical or financial cooperation, or of a diplomatic nature. More recently, the emergence of water in regional security issues in Central Asia has led France and the European Union to assist in capacity building in the area, especially for the production and sharing of information necessary to water resources managers (project, in particular, for the Amu Darya basin).

I) RENDER OUR INSTRUMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE MORE EFFECTIVE IN THE FIELD OF WATER

→ **Support the identification, by 2015, of clear and effective sectoral frameworks in countries where AFD intervenes**, so as to improve the functioning of the water sector and to mobilize national and international funding, consistent with realistic funding strategies based on the "3 Ts" (Taxes, Tariffs, Transfers)

→ **Continue efforts to strengthen capacities at all levels**: beyond technical assistance, promote the French offer of technical and managerial training, and support the establishment of North-South and South-South partnerships between operators

→ **Ensure that any project on access to drinking water as part of French cooperation includes hygiene promotion and sanitation as one of its components**

→ **Strengthen coordination among major donors**: increase the number of joint programs and continue the implementation of mutual recognition of procedures, especially with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) of Germany, extending it where possible to other donors (EU, multilateral institutions, etc..)

II) CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA THROUGH BETTER ACCESS TO SAFE WATER AND SANITATION

→ **Contribute effectively to improve access to water and sanitation in Africa, by providing the necessary support to the revitalization of the African Development Bank's flagship initiatives** : the African Water Facility and fund of the Initiative for Water Supply and Sanitation in Rural Areas, which have accumulated valuable experience and already registered undeniable results, need further support, both political and financial

→ **Keep the focus of efforts on the poorest countries**: France commits itself to devoting at

least 60% of its financial efforts to Sub-Saharan Africa and encourages its partners to confirm, in the context of the EU's development policy, the priority given to water and sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa, given the backwardness of this sector as compared with the Millennium Development Goals

→ **Assist, in a sustainable development perspective, increased use of Africa's hydropower potential**, particularly in the Niger and Senegal basins

III) USE SAFE WATER AND SANITATION TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

→ **Increase access to water and sanitation in Gaza**: help implement the seawater desalination project under the Union for the Mediterranean label, participate in the development a training system for water professionals

→ **Continue efforts already well underway to remove pollutants in the Mediterranean** announced by France at the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean (H2020 initiative)

→ **Support, by 2015, the labeling by the Union for the Mediterranean of projects implementing national water data systems as well as an international network in most Mediterranean countries**

→ **Encourage the development of operational tools to help manage water demand**, such as the *Strateau* tool developed by France in partnership with Mediterranean countries: making it a reference tool in the Mediterranean by 2015

→ **Develop research and innovation to address global change, particularly climate change**: invite other Euro-Mediterranean nations to join the cooperation program launched by France and Germany in 2011 between the Helmholtz centers and organizations within AllEnvi (National Alliance for Environmental Research) on observation and research on innovative solutions for managing water resources

KEEP THE PLANET BLUE: ADAPTING MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES AND WATER ECOSYSTEMS TO THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Better manage the resource to meet the basic needs of humanity requires adapting now to the changes taking place globally. Climate change, its cross-cutting implications and the magnitude of the changes it causes, acts as a catalyst to other problems. Faced with the alarming deterioration of biodiversity, preservation efforts must go hand in hand with better management of ecosystem services, as far as water is concerned.

I) STRENGTHEN THE INTEGRATION OF WATER INTO CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

→ **Promote water savings domestically by ensuring more efficient management of the resource**, in accordance with the national plan for adaptation to climate change, saving 20% of all collected water (outside winter water storage) by 2020

→ **Promote scientific exchanges between water experts and IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) experts** in particular as regards impacts and adaptation.

→ **Encourage, by 2015, the establishment and operations of an international working group to work out a methodological frame of reference**, in order to help those responsible for water policy to take into account climate uncertainties in resource planning and management; help create a network of pilot basin organizations, to begin testing this frame of reference by 2015 and develop a best practices guidebook

→ **Encourage a greater integration of water into the various multilateral instruments for financing the fight against climate change**

II) INCREASED ATTENTION ON INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WATER MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

→ **Restore ecosystem functions** : in France, increase surfaces of conserved and sustainably managed wetlands 20% by 2020 (acquisition of 20,000 hectares by 2015), systematize grass strips along watercourses, set up the “green and blue grids” to ensure ecological continuity

→ **Internationally, support implementation of water relevant objectives for the Strategic Plan (2011-2020) adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity**

PROMOTING A MORE EFFICIENT WATER GOVERNANCE

Water is a precious, vital resource. Good governance of this sector is a legitimate issue and an essential objective. Experience, however, has shown that its integration into discussions is made difficult by sensitive issues around access to water, whatever its uses. A pragmatic approach is needed. It should lead us to turn in priority to the territorial levels that are relevant to better water management and in particular those corresponding to watersheds. Internationally, efforts made to rationalize the governance of sustainable development must apply to the water sector. Finally, the human dimension will be better integrated into water management through increased information and training efforts.

I) CONSOLIDATING THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES, STRENGTHENING BASIN MANAGEMENT

→ **in France, set up a platform for permanent dialogue** on water cooperation between the state, its public institutions, local authorities and NGOs

→ **With the help of water agencies, engage French local authorities with a view to promoting broader membership in the Istanbul Compact**

→ **Internationally, promote signing of the "Pact of river basin authorities" by the greatest number of relevant agencies** and continue efforts to strengthen the capacities of intergovernmental bodies for the management of transboundary basins

II) IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL WATER GOVERNANCE

→ **Suggest that water be included in the mandate of the World Environment Organization (which, just like the EU as a whole, France hopes will be established at the Rio +20 conference) or of UNEP in case of institutional status quo.**

→ **Promote instruments aimed at sustainable and responsible governance of water resources shared by several States on transboundary basins, in particular the 1997 UN Convention on international watercourses. Organize a meeting of States Parties to the latter convention as soon as it enters into force.**

→ **Encourage the transfer of experience by intergovernmental commissions on transboundary rivers** to which France is party, towards countries or regions that are creating, or have created, equivalent organizations

→ **Obtain ratification by the European Union of the 1999 Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 UN-ECE Convention** and implement the financial means to assist countries of Central and East Asia to implement it.

III) DEVELOP EXCHANGES ON WATER POLICY, SCALE UP RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TRAINING EFFORTS

→ **Establish, as part of this new governance, a Virtual International University of Water-related Knowledge.** The primary purpose of this university is to gather all relevant information available on water, i.e.: hydrographic, demographic, economic, social, legal and cultural data.

→ **Through education and training, support the unprecedented effort undertaken in terms of infrastructure:** facilitate the establishment of 20 centers for water and sanitation training around the world by 2020, mobilizing, if relevant, French cooperation instruments and water agencies through the "sponsorship" formula, promote the development of training skills around the water and sanitation sectors within the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

→ **Ensure the establishment of a mechanism to monitor commitments made at the World Water Forum,** in this context, propose a system for a "peer review" of commitments made during the Forum, to be experimented in 2015.
