

PALAIS DE L'ELYSEE
June 2nd 2010

6th WORLD WATER FORUM

KICK-OFF MEETING

Speech by Mr. Loïc FAUCHON

President, World Water Council

Mr President of the Republic

Excellencies, Ministers and Ambassadors

Dear friends of water,

What a fine moment for water, for such a noble and vital cause, that we are gathered here today in this high place of the French Republic.

To the gratitude of the Mayor of Marseille, I would like to add the warm thanks of the great water family and our gratefulness to President Nicolas Sarkozy.

By greeting us here, the President of the Republic solemnly marks – and this gesture is echoed the world over- the importance France, its government and yourself give to this cause so essential to the future of humanity.

Severe threats obviously weigh over water: demographic growth, urban concentrations, coastal pollutions, development imperatives and even a whimsical climate. These threats are real and even though they should not be exaggerated they certainly should not be ignored.

These threats call for harrowing new actions and the citizens of the world are well aware of this. A certain conception of the world will slowly but surely vanish even if the need to produce goods and the rising of living standards represent a legitimate hope for billions of women and men.

Another conception that is more respectful of Nature is beginning to impose itself but the momentum varies whether you are dealing with

yesterday's rulers or today's emerging players. Nevertheless we will progressively consume better and waste less.

Water shortage is the everyday reality of too many earth dwellers. It is often the result of years of inconsistencies and lack of foresight. This was our strong claim in Istanbul last year and we repeat it here again today: "the time of easy water is definitely behind us."

Obviously, we will continue with our efforts to bring more water to those who are cruelly deprived of the resource.. Man's genius is devoted to a world in which fetching water will no longer be an ordeal, a world in which one can freely quench one's thirst, wash up, irrigate and more generally have access to water resources essential to development.

Pumping, storage, transfers, desalination, recycling, the options are multiple and fortunately technology is providing solutions to better mobilize the resource. In its role, the World Water Council brings its contribution thanks to the competencies, experience and passion of its 400 member organisations that I wish to thank here for their commitment.

We have become aware that our behaviours have now started to change.

Thanks to the efforts of several countries among which France but also a multitude of regions and cities, the way is paved to manage water resources in a more responsible manner and to progressively shift from an unacceptable looting to a more equitable sharing.

Equitable sharing -by all means- because no one can pretend depriving his neighbour of water he or she naturally needs. No to confiscated water and yes to shared water. Hence we will bring even more attention to the highly sensitive and strategic issue of trans-border basins. And we take this opportunity to renew our offer to

facilitate exchanges as we have done since the Mexico Forum for the Tiger and Euphrates.

Equitable sharing but also equity between humans, between territories and chiefly between Humankind and Nature in order to offer guarantees and better distribute sound water in sufficient quantity to ensure the respect of biodiversity and the necessary protection of ecosystems.

This “ awareness” of the moral value of water evidently imposes a kind of hydro vigilance to which our Council is very much attached.

Hence we are now guarantor of a form of growth that will return to the natural medium what it has already given to us.

Some may say that this kind of growth pattern is green, others that it's blue. Whatever the colour as long as we all share the same ambition of guarantying access to water and sanitation to the largest number while maintaining a perfect hydric and ecological security.

This also means the guaranty of equity in stating the right of each individual and each community to have access at all times and in all locations to a resource corresponding to individual as well as collective needs.

On March 22nd, the Council of the European Union helped humankind make a great leap by stating that “access to safe drinking water was not only a human right but that it formed an integral part of the right to a decent standard of living something that is closely tied to human dignity.”

Let's hope that all the members of the G8 and G20 along with the entire international community share this conviction and take the necessary actions. The every day life of billions of individuals, their freedom to feed and care for themselves is at stake here.

We all know that this new vision does not only concern water and sanitation but the whole of scarce resources.

In reality, producing energy and making water more accessible boils down to the same battle. Throughout the world, it is always the same, the poorest and most deprived who cruelly lack water as much as electricity. And when there is no energy or the tariffs shoot up, it is access to water that suffers.

No water without energy, no energy without water. The World Water Council stated that before Copenhagen, and I repeat it today: the future of energy is intertwined with that of water.

This is why we propose and advocate that water be part of the now famous energy-climate package because, in fact, what the world needs is a water-energy package as it needs a new reviewed negotiation on climate that is better balanced between the necessity to fight against poverty and the imperatives of a rigorous protection of biodiversity.

This new association between water and energy would naturally justify the setting up of a “World Fund for Scarce Resources” that our Council advocates notably to encourage the production of energy especially dedicated to water.

With the right to water and energy for water asserted, the path is clear towards proposing innovative funding schemes, harmonious governance and shared know-how.

Together, France, Marseille and the World Water Council, have decided to take up this exciting challenge by organising the 6th World Water Forum in March 2012.

Beyond all the disasters announced by the media each day, we have agreed to privilege a positive vision, a collective reflection and a socially aware approach to make this Forum the “Forum of solutions”.

We are taking up this challenge with enthusiasm because we all belong to a kind that would rather hear the sound of trickling water than the silence of life escaping.

I thank you all and especially you, Mr President of the Republic, thank you Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers, dear colleagues and friends for joining us without further delay and help us give water a chance. It is a planetary urgency.

Thank you