

**SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL WATER WEEK**  
**5 July 2011**

**SOUTH EAST ASIA WATER MINISTERS  
PLENARY**

**Mr.Loïc FAUCHON**

**President, World Water Council**

Ministers, Excellencies,

It is a pleasure, and also an honour, to be gathered here in this month of July on the occasion of the fourth edition of the Singapore International Water Week.

Please allow me, on behalf of the World Water Council, to express our thanks and admiration to the Singapore authorities and the organizers, for this very high quality Week which has become a key event on the international agenda.

With the delegation accompanying me, I am very pleased to be able to meet you - political leaders, economic decision-makers, and scientists - to exchange ideas on the great challenges of our time in the fields of water, sanitation, and environment, and more broadly on the situation regarding natural resources.

We live in a changing world, a very fast-changing world, especially in Asia. The population is considerably increasing, and this is true in Asia more than anywhere else. Tensions over water resources are running higher, and in some parts of the world, water is becoming a scarce resource.

Tomorrow's world will be first and foremost urban. By 2030, almost seventy percent of the world's population is expected to live in cities. And cities have much bigger water needs than rural areas. Urban water use is more diversified, with massive consumption levels; pollution is severe and stringent control is lacking.

So, the main challenges facing humanity do not simply lie in water for agriculture. One can also say that in the coming decades, cities will be the arena where the peaceful battle for water will be won or lost.

Because dear friends, undoubtedly, we will have to lead a battle, a dual battle on two fronts: on the one hand, water for the development of mankind, for economic and social development. Access to water, access to sanitation, is first and foremost the access to dignity for almost half of the inhabitants of our planet. This battle for essential values is not negotiable.

Improved living standards, changes in eating habits, new consumption patterns, all require additional quantities of freshwater.

At the same time, the other battle we have to wage is that for "water for nature", to preserve ecosystems and maintain biodiversity. It is our duty to preserve the biological balance of our great rivers. It is also a necessity to ensure the survival of marine ecosystems threatened by increasing air and ocean temperatures, by increasing acidity of the marine environment and by anoxia caused by agricultural effluents.

Some cities, which have not been able to prevent the exponential growth of chemical pollutions, have today become ticking "sanitary" bombs that we cannot diffuse.

To win this battle, we must support a movement, which although double-sided, is not contradictory. While continuing to increase water supply, we must engage a stringent regulation of water demand.

Technological advances in the transfer of water over long distances will make possible a wider use of such technologies. For instance, the urban pressure present in Arab countries like

Algeria, or Asian countries like China, justifies the transfer of increasingly-large water masses.

Desalination has improved over the years, and its cost has considerably decreased: as a result, around fifty countries now use this technology. But in years to come, we will have look for energy savings in the field of desalination, and we must raise awareness of the danger presented by excessive salt release in the marine environment. The difficulties experienced today by some Persian Gulf countries are a prime example.

Pumping in deep aquifers, using karst resurgences will also bring a contribution. And of course, above all, wastewater recycling and reuse open up significant opportunities to better manage the small water cycle.

But all this would remain insufficient without a more assertive policy for dams and reservoirs, which would meet the dual challenge of producing hydraulic energy and reinforcing seasonal storage in response to growing agricultural and domestic needs.

Mankind will still need technological progress and innovation, provided by engineers and scientists. And for a long time still to come.

At the same time, we will have to impose the idea that a new relationship between Man and Water is needed. We must stop wasting water and consume less. We must better manage water, for all types of uses everywhere across the globe. Each State in the planet must implement water demand regulation policies. Each Minister, each political decision-maker present here today, knows that it is a highly political decision, a commitment that governments and parliaments will have to make in the years to come.

Please allow me to add a few other remarks on what should lay the groundwork for global water policies.

Firstly, together we must address the issue of water for energy and that of energy for water. One is essential for the other and vice-versa.

The World Water Council calls for a principle of equality between energy and water that would apply to future climate negotiations.

Let's stop talking about an energy-climate package. Let's admit the necessity for a water-energy package that would be at the centre of all climate negotiations

Financial compensations asked by the poorest countries to implement policies that respect the environment and consume less carbon dioxide, should be used as much for water than for energy.

A global fund dedicated to water resources protection and to the production of energy for water, should be created without further delay.

On the other hand, I would like to draw your attention to the debate on our fundamental obligations. What do we use water for? On which territories? Like me, you must have noticed that over the last few months, the idea of a water-energy- food nexus has been pushed to the forefront of the water debate. It is, of course, necessary to mobilise water and energy to produce more food to meet the demands of an additional one billion people every ten to fifteen years.

But while focussing on water for food, there is the danger of forgetting that Water for health is another essential necessity.

We must eradicate the primary causes of death in the world, such as waterborne diseases. Our duty is to give to each inhabitant of this planet the opportunity to access clean and safe drinking water. This is the duty of all governments and all political, economic, national and local authorities.

We cannot claim to ensure the quality of water for agriculture, if we continue to poison it with chemical pollution from the modern world that remains untreated. Water and energy should be equally at the service of water and health. This is not simply a matter of technological progress, but above all, an issue for political debate.

The priority given to water and sanitation is above all a political *priority*; “taps before guns”, “water as much as computers”.

Ministers, dear water friends, I call upon your support, now more than ever, to raise water and sanitation to the rank of a planetary priority during the upcoming international events such as Bonn+10, the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, and Rio +20.

First, we have to state publicly the priority given to water, before collecting and providing solutions, which we hope will lead to “commitments to water” undertaken by each State and each local authority willing to join this movement.

With my friend Mr. Benedito Braga, who is here today, with the Korean and Chinese WWC Governors accompanying me, we will pay attention to your remarks, so as to bring to the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Marseille practical and sustainable solutions that will facilitate the access to safe drinking water and sanitation to hundreds of millions of families.

On behalf of the World Water Council, I am pleased to invite you to come to Marseilles in March 2012 to participate in the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum. Let me also inform you that a specific side-event dedicated to the Forum preparation will be held this afternoon at 4 pm room 202.

Thank you for your support, and I wish you all a successful week.