



Special session on the mobilization of Senegal

Celebration of World Water Day 22 and 23 March 2021

"On the road to the 9th World Water Forum"

Webinar organized by the Republic of Senegal, the 9th World Water Forum Secretariat and the World Water Council

Speech by Loïc Fauchon

President of the World Water Council

Dear Mr. Minister Serigne Mbaye Thiam, thank you very much for your warm words and for having allowed the World Water Council to engage with you for this special session dedicated to the living forces of Senegal.

Dear Senegalese friends, Dear friends of water

Throughout this coming year, the water world will be looking at Senegal and Dakar, the country and the city with which the World Water Council signed an agreement- almost two years ago - to organize the World Water Forum in 2022, since we have postponed it by one year.

This forum, Mr. Minister and myself, we both want it to be new. We want it to be different, we want it to be focused on answers, "responses".

You mentioned this yourself, Mr. Minister, and I have heard you use this word several times.

Why answers or responses ?

Because answers, or responses, are even more concrete than solutions. Solutions are known by the world. Africa and Senegal know the solutions. But these solutions are not always applied on the ground because of a lack of knowledge, incomplete governance, and insufficient funding. And this is the reason why we want to transpose the solutions that we know about throughout the world into answers that can change the daily lives of those who do not have access to water. It is for them that we are working and it is for them that Senegal and the World Water Council must work hard for a year to make a “forum of responses”.

You mentioned it, Mr. Minister, from now on, every minute counts and often it counts double or even triple. So, I would just like to say some words about your country, the land of Teranga, which will once again impress us with its natural capacity for hospitality.

Senegal has experienced, and is experiencing on its territory, everything that one can imagine in terms of water situations, such as difficulty of access to water, droughts and floods. Just last year in the greater Dakar area, there were shortages, pollution, tensions, and crises, as in so many other countries, because this is not unique to Senegal.

And if Senegal, on the one hand, has experienced all the difficulties, it will now show the world that Senegal knows the solutions, the answers, and that these solutions are already implemented in Senegal in various fields.

First, how about securing the resources ?

You have several resources at your disposal: the Senegal River in the main, but also the sea, since you've also started desalination, and then there are the resources of the catchment areas, which are important in the greater Dakar area and even beyond.

But you have to face two difficulties, like the whole world. The evolution of the climate, and above all, the growth of the population, the demographic growth which requires us to have a greater quantity of water and at the same time to better manage the water we have.

It is a question of ensuring good management of water services, both technically and socially, by making the populations understand that water is a scarce resource today and that it must be managed with economy, with care, with benevolence.

Without doubt, in the future, large water transfers will have to be expanded. I said it to the President of the Republic a short while ago: thanks to the absolutely exceptional management, I mean the exemplary management of the Senegal River through the OMVS (Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal), you have extremely important water allocations that will undoubtedly allow for a supply to the interior of the country, because growth cannot remain on the coast. When we see the evolution of the city of Touba, but also of other cities in the interior of the country, they will have to be served by additional transfers.

You also already have important achievements in terms of unconventional resources. I mentioned desalination earlier, but the evolution of tomorrow's world will also turn more towards the reuse of wastewater. This will undoubtedly be the most novel solution, but also the most important one, for the world's cities and also for the cities of Senegal, once the sanitation problems of Greater Dakar have been resolved.

And finally, securing water is also about finding the most balanced pricing. The one that allows us to maintain access to water for the most deprived, for the poorest, and at the same time, the price that brings in revenue for water management.

We are used to saying in French that "l'eau paye l'eau" (water pays for water), which means that we have set up autonomous budgets for water and sanitation, and that the revenue from water, little by little, even when it is subsidized, pays for water expenses.

All this without forgetting that the right to water must be recognised everywhere and in a sustainable way in the constitutions or founding texts of countries, because it is a strong political statement. Today, only around fifty countries in the world have done so, and we must all campaign together at the time of the Forum so that the right to water is recognized in different ways.

The right to water must also be implemented for access to water for the poorest people, with free allowances or with minimum allowances, as everyone will find a suitable solution.

Finally, you mentioned, Mr. Minister, the need for hydro-diplomacy. The OMVS (Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal) is a remarkable example of hydro-diplomacy.

Hydro-diplomacy is also what is practiced every day between the State and the parliament, between the parliament and the basins, between the basin authorities and the local authorities.

Hydro-diplomacy consists of finding the harmonious framework for governance that is deconcentrated and decentralized. In any case, it should bring responsibility for water as close as possible to the populations for whom it is an essential good.

All this without setting the rural and urban worlds against each other.

I would like to testify here to the accuracy of the view that the Senegalese team - I am not talking about football, but about water! - that your team, Mr. Minister, has brought, by wanting to give priority in the Forum, for the first time, to "the rural world facing the urban world". Let us not forget that if we know how to provide basic services to rural populations, water, electricity, food, health and education, we will succeed in slowing down the rural exodus to the cities. And we must not oppose the city against rural areas.



It is in rural areas that water resources are located, and the people in the countryside take care of the water resources. They must obviously have their share of access to water. There are so many so called "Smart Cities" today throughout the world, and there must also be "smart" rural areas that are somehow responsible for the production of water resource.

These are just a few considerations, I could tell you a lot, as I often stay in your country, to tell you how much we love it, very simply, how much we love your hospitality and how proud we are to work with you, and I am certain that you will once again show the great qualities of the Senegalese people to make the 9th World Water Forum a landmark one.

And I am sure that later, after the Dakar edition of the Forum we will hear, "we have done this thanks to Dakar; thanks to Dakar we have done that". This is the reason why we need to provide extremely concrete answers to the people who are waiting for them in a year's time.

I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I greet you all while waiting to come back to Dakar to meet you.