

Welcome address Opening Plenary on
Freshwater IUCN Congress 2021

4 septembre 2021 11a.m

Dear friends of water and nature,

On my own behalf, on behalf of this Exhibition premises named Parc Chanot and on behalf of the World Water Council which I have the honor to chair, I have the great pleasure to welcome you in Marseille.

The World Water Council, which headquarters are based in Marseille for over 25 years, has been expecting for a long time this Nature Congress.

And we are pleased that the IUCN has devoted a session to Freshwater, because water is essential for biodiversity.

For many decades, water has been at the exclusive service of human needs. For a long time, Man has only looked at Nature because it contributed to his survival and then to his comfort. Watering livestock, watering crops, quenching thirst, preventing from disease, producing electricity or enhancing leisure time.

This is how Nature has been gradually enslaved to the service of the human race alone. And this phenomenon has only become more pronounced over the centuries with the increasingly rapid growth of the world's population.

Water resources have become scarcer and their quality has deteriorated. The situation can be summed up as "water for the life of Man and water for the death of Nature"... The awakening is recent, the awareness is late that it is necessary to leave its water quota to Nature.

The future of water is intimately linked to the actions of mankind but also to the situation of Nature.

After the time of wasting, the time of sharing is now needed. A harmonious sharing between domestic, agricultural and industrial uses, a realistic and thoughtful sharing between Man and Nature.

To guarantee this sharing, a fundamental change in thinking is essential. It implies to recognize the role of Nature in human prosperity.

Political, economic and social systems will have to gradually place Nature at the heart of the decisions to be taken in matters of climate and demography.

Moreover, the universal right to water will also be guaranteed by securing aquatic ecosystems through what we now call Nature Based Solutions (NBS). These solutions aim to restore and protect natural ecosystems to enhance biodiversity while ensuring human well-being.

Water is obviously at the heart of these "Nature Based Solutions" because they include the restoration of wetlands, the vegetation of waterbasins as well as human settlements.

They contribute to securing water resources, but also to slowing down runoffs, encouraging infiltration of rainwater and regulating floods.

To promote these nature-based solutions, the World Water Council, together with several of its members, including the International Network of Basin Organizations, the Nature Conservancy, and the International Office for Water,

with the support of IUCN, is launching an initiative called

"No Water Security without Ecological Security, No Ecological Security without Water Security" or more simply "save water for humans and for nature".

This initiative has three main goals:

First, to create a real place of action between water and nature communities,

Second, to promote the implementation of Nature-based Solutions by all the actors in the field,

and third, to prepare a political and social event dedicated to these NBS during the World Water Forum in Dakar

The objective, a few months before the 9th World Water Forum to be held in Dakar in March 2022, is to present several dozen of these solutions, in real life and by those who implement them.

Because beyond the speeches, beyond the solutions imagined in laboratories and research centers, Citizens demand answers.

Answers that are concrete and local, equitable and sustainable. Answers that change or improve their daily lives, that respect Nature and that bring Peace and Prosperity.

Bringing these answers and sharing them is our responsibility, it is our duty, it is urgent!