



Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council

Speech for the 40th Anniversary of the Mediterranean Water Institute

Dear friends of the Mediterranean, Dear friends of Water

For compelling reasons, it was finally not possible for me to participate in these days of celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Mediterranean Institute of Water in this beautiful city of Valencia. I regret it very much and I apologize for it.

It is a privilege that I keep intact in my memory to have been present at the creation of the Institute, in Marseille in 1982. This is an opportunity for me to greet Michel Pezet, its first president, and his successors Lassaad Ben Osman, Mohammed Ben Blidia, Mohamed Ennabli, Milagros Couchoud and now Alain Meyssonier.

Each one of them with his/her experience, his/her objectives, brought knowledge and efficiency to our Mediterranean Water Institute, by giving it, step by step, an original vision of the future of the water in the Mediterranean; All of them gave a lot and we return it to them in respect, in consideration and in indefectible friendship.

I will obviously not forget for their presence and their determining contribution, Louis Potié, and Hachmi Kennou too soon gone, our two directors supported for a long time by Malika Roussel and Ida N'Guyen.

The Mediterranean Water Institute has carried the voice of water in the Mediterranean Basin, and beyond, throughout these forty years. We have known about the difficulties of water since the beginning. We have alerted, raised awareness, denounced and demanded to defend the cause of water.

We have not always been heard, and sometimes even ignored, in the face of rising water-related threats.

Demographic saturation on the coasts, increasing pollution of rivers and the sea, intense maritime traffic, industrial anarchy, tourist concentration and above all, warming of land and water which compose our Mare Nostrum.

We have pleaded before governments and parliaments for "a protected Sea and a watered Land".

Maybe we were wrong to have been right too early, but this has not slowed down the militant fervour of each member of the Mediterranean Water Institute during these forty years.

This daily struggle has earned recognition to the Mediterranean Water Institute, as we have accompanied suffering. The suffering of water, the suffering of populations facing the degradation of conditions of access to water and frequent lack of sanitation. The land is fragile, the sea is sick. Populations are increasing and the climate is moving. The water resource per inhabitant, permanent or seasonal, is constantly decreasing, to the point that for many of them, the daily quest for water is a daily anguish.

And yet, everyone of us has been present for years, altogether public and private organizations, professionals and associations, to put forward proposals and solutions to secure the resource, access to water and shared uses.

Suffering yes, but also Hope. Hope that our studies, our work, our suggestions will be taken into account and allow us to reverse the

trend. These proposals, our proposals, have been expressed during these two days.

Let us summarize them simply.

The supply, on the one hand, can only be increased and secured by diversifying solutions in a way that is both proactive and respectful.

Using the whole range, deep pumping, groundwater recharge, large transfers, reservoirs which respect ecosystems, desalination, wastewater reuse and others that the genius of engineers and the evolution of technology and digital science may allow, bringing Water for Man, as much as conserving Water for Nature. You know all this in detail.

Demand, on the other hand, must be managed, regulated and I would even say controlled. Through more efficient and more sustainable managing techniques.

The Mediterranean Water Institute was a pioneer in the 1980s and 1990s and its work on these subjects is a reference.

We must now go further without taboos, and by acting with the sole will of a better efficiency, and of a total equity in space and time.

Let's not oppose peasants and the city dwellers, tourists and industrials. Let us say everywhere that there is no more place for carelessness, where it is necessary now to share transparency.

We should now be tracking down leaks, chasing down waste, debating the values of water, both a public good and a common good, in all communities. Let's use the digital revolution to better save today's water, for the benefit of tomorrow's water. It is only prudent and considerate for the water heritage that we shall leave to our children and their descendants.

Dear friends, thanks to your commitment, to your knowledge, we are gradually making the Mediterranean area as the laboratory of the answers for water challenges.

This is a message that I have come to bring you as President of the World Water Council.

The Mediterranean is sometimes worried, but the Mediterranean is envied. On behalf of the Council that I have the honour and the chance to chair, I consider that it is from the Mediterranean that an important part of the future of water will be written.

This is the reason why the Council entrusted a mission to the Mediterranean Water Institute three years ago in Beirut. It is to design and implement an Observatory of non-conventional water resources backed by renewable energies. Thank you to all those who have already established the first conclusions within the framework of the Mediterranean Water Institute. They are very promising.

The Mediterranean Water Institute is one of the main partners of the World Water Council and I would like to express my personal commitment to expand this cooperation.

My friends, some say that the Mediterranean is divided. This is not true. The Mediterranean is diverse and it is a positive diversity. It is a "living adventure" and our role is to defend it.

The philosopher Spinoza, I believe, said that we must "politicize wonder". Such wonder would allow for new "diplomatic relations, of good understanding with the living, what we can call cosmopolitanism" according to the formula of one of his students.

Let's not give in to the dizziness of the contemporary idolatry of "immediacy" and media pessimism. Omnipresence is not a mode of action because when everything becomes urgent, nothing is! The answer to our worries is not in the "just in time". On the contrary, it is to see far ahead and in the long term. Let's not give in to vertigo, let's believe together in the wonders and in this wonder that gives us wings and energy.

This is the modest but determining role of our common and united action within the Mediterranean Water Institute and the World Water Council.

Be assured, dear Mediterranean friends, of my respect and consideration for the task you assume with competence and humility.

