

20th African Water Association  
International Congress and Exhibition  
Symposium Keynote Speech

24 February 2020 - Kampala

Loïc Fauchon  
President of the World Water Council

Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers and  
Ambassadors,

Dear colleagues from the African Water  
Association,

Dear friends of water,

It is a great pleasure to be here again to  
participate in our General Assembly.

After Bamako in 2018 and here in  
Kampala in 2010.

And allow me to express my consideration  
to the highest authorities of Uganda.

And my greetings to the Ugandan people  
for their fraternal hospitality.

It's a pleasure but it's also an honour to open this Symposium in front of so many friends, colleagues and African water professionals.

Let me convey to you the feelings of respect and friendship from the world water community that I represent here today.

The world is thirsty. And so is Africa.

Because thirst also means the absence of energy, hunger, diseases, ignorance.

Because if water brings life, it can bring death.

Men compete for water, while at the same time, Nature needs it for biodiversity to thrive and ecosystems to live.

Water is the life insurance of human and nature.

Yes, dear friends, without water, there is suffering, without water there are crises. Of all kinds and everywhere.

Let's put aside the economic, diplomatic, climatic and demographic crises for a moment. And others!

Talking about water, we must reflect upon our responsibility, our responsibilities as actors and operators of the water community.

Our responsibility is to ensure the very survival of women and men who experience every day the anguish of the quest for water.

Yes, dear colleagues, this is our responsibility. It is huge, it is individual and collective at the same time.

Finding water, pumping it, transferring it, storing it, preserving it, treating it, distributing it, desalting it, depolluting it,

reusing it, but also considering it, respecting it, saving it, these are the elements of our daily responsibility.

It's a great responsibility that we are proud to take on. But we must still be able to afford it.

- In front of us, there is demographic growth, especially on this African land.
- In front of us, there is urban explosion, concentration in megacities and the slums they generate.

- In front of us, there are giant pollutions, real “health bombs” which cause so many water-borne diseases.
- In front of us, there are rising living standards, overconsumption, food waste and plastic profusion.
- In front of us, there is the evolution of climate, sometimes contradictory and so complex to grasp.

All these difficulties, crises, disasters, contribute, every day, every week, every month, every year, keep on increasing the tension on water resources.

This is the issue of water security, the key word, the requirement for the years and decades to come.

It is not just one SDG among 17 others, which is an abstract concept, a target to be reached.

No, first of all, it is a daily imperative, a reality of every moment, a need for everyone, a right for all.

- Securing water for humans and, at the same time, securing water for nature.
- Securing today's water and securing water for tomorrow. For our children.

- Securing upstream water and securing downstream water for balanced allocations.
- Securing the resource, for its protection and for its use, requires establishing and strengthening the three pillars of our water house: knowledge, finance and governance.

These three pillars are fully interlinked, while the integrated management of water resources is not enough to ensure all water uses.

In addition to this common vertical approach, there is a transversal approach to simultaneously meet mankind's five fundamental needs: access to water, energy, food, health and education.

This is essential. For Africa more than in any other continent.

At this point, dear colleagues,

water providers, water suppliers, local authorities' officials, public and private operators, NGOs working in the field, the question we should be asking ourselves is what can we do? What must we do?

The water and sanitation companies, YOU are managing, play an essential role, being the closest water providers for communities.

To play this role efficiently, let me comment the subject of digital innovation in this rising 21st century.

The great cycle of water (and sanitation) is fully concerned.

For example, digital technologies range from, sensors, remote controls, weather forecasts, data processing, augmented reality, process optimization.

And all kinds of mobile applications.

Let us use the best of wireless networks, data processing, internet of things, cloud, blockchain, for water but also for sanitation, waste, air and energy.

The digital revolution will bring citizens closer from the decisions and will reinforce the feeling of a more local and more participative democracy.

But be careful, dear colleagues, never forget to put the people “in the loop”.

Man is not here to serve technologies.

It is technical progress, now digital, that must serve mankind.

This brings me, before concluding my remarks, to make two recommendations, for your consideration.

The first concerns the relationship between urban and rural areas. Trends, action, and money are going to Smart Cities today.

We dream of cities being paradises, when most of them are hell on earth.

Megacities that grow too fast are too often the cradle of poverty and ignorance.

Who, on the other hand, bears the brunt of nature conservation, protect resources and produces food?

Without protected and cultivated land, without farmers and foresters, how will cities live, how long will they survive?

We must also advocate for “smart rural areas”, seeking rural vitality in the face of the urban dictatorship.

My second recommendation concerns water conservation. Our planet is in great shortage of water reserves, which causes water scarcity, with droughts and famines.

There is a great need for new concept of dams.

It is no longer a question of blocking the flow of water but of explaining that water must be valued, maintained, restored.

These conservation areas, which we could name "aquatic biodiversity reserves" must bring an harmonious development for life and the protection of fauna and flora.

We must all work together to promote this new concept of reservoirs, paramount to the balance between;

Man and Nature, which we call for.

Man and Nature, who both are on the same boat for future of the planet.

Colleagues, dear friends, if we look across Africa, we know that water security is today an integral part of the National Security in each country. And that this calls for real hydro-diplomacy.

Not only through joint management of large transboundary basins. The encouraging or worrying examples being the Senegal River Basins or the Nile River, which are testimonies.

Hydro-diplomacy should also allow an efficient and fair system to refinance water

debts in the poorest countries and regions.

All of this is not and should no longer be the prerogative of governments.

This is the duty of parliaments, of municipalities, and all kinds of local authorities and water operators.

This is our duty, we are the peaceful fighters of the only war that is worth being fought, for Peace of Water.

Some people may probably think that we do not have the means of doing all of.

Perhaps. Not enough. Not yet. But you have, we have a great opportunity.

In a year's time, the 9th World Water Forum will be held in Dakar, co-organized by the State of Senegal and the World Water Council.

Minister Thiam will tell this afternoon more about the architecture of this Forum, which will have to provide the responses that the populations require to give access to water to the poorest.

Until March 2021, Africa is the Capital Water. Let's seize this opportunity so that

the intelligence of Africa can be expressed  
loud and clear.

And so, the voice of Africans be heard by  
the world.

The Africa for water must shape its  
destiny. This Africa for water must show  
the way of peace for water that the people  
of our planet want to take.

Let's take the path from Kampala to Dakar  
together.