



OPENING SPEECH of Loïc Fauchon

3rd CAIRO WATER WEEK

Your Excellency Mr. Prime Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt,

Your Excellency Mr. Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Dear Dr Mohamed Abdel Aty

Your Excellencies Ministers and Ambassadors,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends of water,

It is always a great honor to participate in the opening of the Cairo Water Week.

It is an honor for the World Water Council as well as for myself.

Our relations are old, fruitful and friendly.

The Government of Egypt is one of the founders of our Council and Dr. Abu Zeid was its first President.

I regret today that I am unable to be physically with you. I would have greeted each of you and expressed my respect and consideration.

Egypt is a great water nation. It is due to its history as much as to its geography. It is Egypt's history and geography which have shaped the presence or absence of water and its multiple uses.

The Nile is the archetype, the best-known example of a "nourishing artery" river, as well as the representative of a civilization inspired by water and aquatic culture.

Today Egypt is considered as a "water expert" country, thanks to the knowledge of its engineers, technicians and managers.

This is why the Cairo Water Week has become one of the most famous events on the international water agenda.

This year, you have highlighted the subject of water security in arid regions. This is a wise choice.

First of all because it probably concerns nearly two billion people, living mainly at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East and the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent.

Secondly, because water resources, which are scarce, must be increased in the future to cope with the combined effects of climate change and population growth.

Aridity is a concept as old as the Egyptian civilization.

Arid, " Dafhiala " in Arabic, is a word that comes from the Latin words " areo " and " aridus " which all express drought, as a land that lacks humidity and precipitation.

Yes, this word tells us that in geography, but also in time, the earth is thirsty. And if the earth is thirsty, both Man and Nature suffer.

This is at the heart of our individual and collective responsibilities: ensuring water security.

According to a common definition, this means "safeguarding sustainable access to adequate quantities and quality of water, for socio-economic development, and for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters".

There are two major aspects to water security, whether it is Water for Man or Water for Nature, whether it is water for today or water for tomorrow.

The first is obviously to increase the "raw" water resources. Traditionally, water is captured in wells, boreholes, lakes and rivers.

But century after century this has not been enough. Man has learnt to dig deeper into the core of the Earth.

Man has been capable to transport and transfer water from one region to another. And to store it behind increasingly large dams. And in our time, these efforts have not been enough.

The climate, but above all population growth, has made other solutions necessary, and the genius of Man has contributed to this.

Egypt is a perfect example. It lived through the wrath of the Nile, but saw its population triple in a century. And if the earth is thirsty, populations are thirsty. And water is lacking for its various uses, for agriculture, for industry, for domestic use.

Egyptian engineers are famous throughout the world. And today they are developing some of the most advanced techniques : desalination of sea water and wastewater reuse.

In the very near future, this is where we will draw the additional water resources that the world is needing.

And this is true for every continent, every country, to quench the thirst of megacities and overpopulated territories or touristic regions.

Desalination, since the use of reverse osmosis is a widespread, and less and less expensive technique. It will develop especially along deep coasts, where the excess salt will dissipate without threatening the ocean fauna and flora.

Desalination is also a solution in the middle of desert lands where aquifers and fossil underground water have been salinated for thousand years.

But the future of water resources will be transformed by new techniques like wastewater reuse. This is the major source of freshwater that humanity so badly needs in the coming decades.

And if these additional resources are attractive, it is because they are renewable.

That is why, for their development, we have the duty to imagine, step by step, the use of energies that are also totally renewable, hydraulic, solar, wind, tidal and others.

We know, and we are pleased to note, that the Egyptian government, under the leadership of President Sissi, is at the forefront of this specific struggle and is feeding the world water community with its advanced expertise and innovations.

But, as I said, increasing water resources is only one aspect of water security.

It is imperative to save these resources by reducing all our forms of consumption.

This mainly involves two things: the first is to manage all the stages of the water cycle more efficiently every day, collecting, transferring, treating, distributing, purifying. By avoiding waste, but also pollution that poisons people, as well as crops and livestock.

The second is to bring about a major change in our behaviour: to sustainably reduce our consumption, both agricultural and domestic.

The comprehensive programme launched by Egypt in recent years is an example for the world.

Farmers, schoolchildren, students, employees in fields, schools, universities, administrations, companies, homes. Everywhere, and at every moment, we must raise water savings as a virtue and a civic obligation.

This is how technological innovation on the one hand and change in our behaviours (or "habits") on the other hand, will gradually ensure the control of water availability. This is why Egypt's efforts are helping to show the way to respecting natural resources while at the same time satisfying development needs.

These programmes, if they are sustainable, must also be equitable.

Equity, for every individual, means the need to promulgate the right to water both institutionally, by writing it in the Constitution, and in practice, by allocating a minimum amount of drinking water to every person

Equity also means sharing water within a river basin, including between nations.

In this respect, we are closely following the efforts to put an end to the current tensions arising from the construction of the Renaissance Dam. Dialogue and realism must prevail if equity is to be the rule and sharing is an obligation in accordance with international law.

On behalf of the four hundred member organizations of the World Water Council, I reiterate our availability to help bring the parties closer together and establish the rules of an agreement acceptable to all.

This availability is the essential characteristic of the Hydrodiplomacy that our Council has developed since its creation twenty-five years ago.

Exchange and dialogue is at the heart of the raison-d'être of the World Water Forums that our Council organizes every three years.

I would like to thank Egypt and so many other nations and organizations which contribute to the success of international conferences dedicated to bringing new responses for water, promoting technical, administrative, financial and above all political solutions.

Ensuring water security means, first of all, to give priority to the political nature of the decisions to be taken, for Development and Peace.

NO DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT WATER, NO PEACE WITHOUT DEVELOPMENT, NO DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT PEACE.

It is under this double sign of development of peace for water that we invite all the participants in this Cairo Water Week to walk on the road to Dakar 2021 together and to bring the answers expected by all those who have been forgotten in the process of access to water.

Full success to the Cairo Water Week !