Brazil Water Week
26 October 2020

OPENING SPEECH

Speech of Mr. Loïc Fauchon
President of the World Water Council

Dear Governor of Sao Paulo, Estimado Dr Joao Doria

Mr. President Benedito Braga, Dear Brother

Mr. President of the ABES, Dear Alceo Bittencourt,

Dear Brazilian Governors of the World Water Council

Dear Friends of Water,

Water for All, the subject of this Week couldn't be a better choice!

Let me tell you how much I regret that sanitary circumstances do not allow me to be in Brazil today.

It is always a great honour and pleasure to meet and work with you, the water professionals of Brazil.

Your know-how is recognized worldwide and ABES has long been a distinguished member of our Board.

Everyone will understand that I have a special greeting for Benedito Braga. He has contributed to the development and influence of the Council, before, during and after his presidency. I would like to reiterate to him here my friendly consideration and great respect.

The Covid is separating us, the Covid is fighting us, the COVID is hurting us.

But it will not distract us from our values, our ideals of peace, justice and equity.

During the past year we have learned a lot. Not only for medical and health reasons.

And on this point I would like to salute the efforts of the State of Sao Paulo and of the Governor to contribute to the development of a vaccine against Covid. This is another proof of the capacity for innovation that irrigates Brazil, with its scientists, and its entire population.

But we have also had confirmation of the role and importance of water in contagious diseases. While water sometimes brings death, it also brings life and hope.

Water combined with soap and disinfectants is the first and most effective barrier.

But we also need a serious treatment of effluents and human excreta to help prevent the spread of viruses in general and Covid in particular.

Drinking, eating and taking care of oneself, reminds us that water is indeed the life insurance of Humanity.

And it is our primary responsibility, as professionals and scientists on the one hand, and as elected politicians and economic leaders on the other, to ensure the coverage of this life insurance for the entire population, and in particular for the weakest and poorest.

Brazil, a great nation and vast territory, is characteristic of all water situations. As the planet's main hydrographic basin and a concentration of land and ocean biodiversity, the country shares its water for energy, agricultural production and satisfying the thirst of cities that are growing with difficulty.

In 2018, The Brasilia World Water Forum, which successfully brought together the planet of water, showed that Water Security must combine technological

solutions and political will. We can translate this as the strengthening of the three pillars on which the “Universal Water House” is built.

The Three Pillars are:

Knowledge, to disseminate Innovation,

It is Finance to enable Development,

And this is Governance to ensure Sharing.

But today and tomorrow we must go further. We must not only multiply technical, institutional, and financial solutions, but above all ensure their sustainable and equitable implementation to give "Answers for the World", to give “Responses”.

Yes, dear Friends of Water, the peoples of the world are thirsty and they are waiting in the nude, for us to know how to quench their thirst.

In the fields, on every farm, in every factory, in every home, through "Local Water Security".

I am sure that this Brazilian Water Week will be an opportunity to present some of these answers. And I know that you will also take them, like the rest of the world, to the next World Water Forum, the 9th, which we are co-organizing with our Senegalese friends in Dakar.

This is not the time or the place to go into all the details of water security.

I would just like to mention, through the example of Brazil and South America, some important topics for the future of Water.

The example of the current pandemic shows all over the world that it is in the cities, in the megacities, that viruses are circulating, because that is where inequality and poverty are concentrated.

In this century, we will have to reconsider the relationship between man, the urban world and the rural world. Tomorrow, there will not be "Smart Cities" only. Rural territories are also the future of Humanity.

Avoiding major epidemics and feeding the world requires a better use of the territory, together with protection and respect for Nature.

The time of rural colonization by the urban system is coming to an end.

If the rural exodus gradually dries up, the migration from misery to the urban world will gradually come to an end. Soon the capitals will no longer be cities but regions of mixed urban and rural areas. Regions where Man and Nature will no longer be opposed against each other, but where they will be reconciled and cooperate harmoniously.

And what about water in this better world?

More than ever, water will be the link, the conductor, the facilitator. Climate evolution and population growth already require protecting water and consume less of it. The most spectacular change will be the decrease in water consumption for agriculture. We are being forced to produce agricultural, animal and forestry products that will use less water.

The word "agro-ecology" should not frighten us, but on the contrary, raise hope to reduce hunger, by keeping people in mixed urban AND rural communities.

But this new balance must be based on better distributed and renewable water resources.

In coastal regions, the desalination of sea water has made it possible to stabilize populations. However, this resource will remain limited, because it still needs too much energy, and this energy is not enough renewable.

One of the revolutions that will guarantee water security is based on the extension and generalization of the reuse of waste water.

Indeed, step by step, cities and villages will be recycling their domestic, industrial and agricultural effluents. This is the largest remarkable renewable freshwater reservoir that humanity will have at its disposal during this century.

In addition to irrigation for agricultural production, and other uses, the reuse of wastewater also makes it possible to produce energy as biogas or heating networks, and to be integrated into carbon credit programs.

But reused water gives also the opportunity of recovering nitrogen and phosphorus, particularly from sewage plant sludge. And these new processes allow their transformation into organic or organo-mineral fertilizers, which are key elements for plant growth.

Water reuse will also be a valuable source of water and fertilizers, especially in arid and populated territories.

All this will not be a revolution but a slow and continuous evolution. It will require a new regulatory framework, adequate funding, protection of the environment and people, and raising public awareness, especially among the younger generations.

But these are serious purposes, adaptable to every region of the world, which perfectly adapt to the concept of circular economy.

Circular economy, like global development, will be acceptable and sustainable only if it is equitable, if it is a benefit for everyone.

It will certainly be a long way to get there, to gather children, women and men around this peaceful battle for access to water, energy, food, health and education.

This peaceful battle is a pressing obligation, so that the poorest, the oppressed, the forgotten people may obtain respect, dignity and peace.

This is the goal of the 9th Dakar Forum: “Peace for development and development for peace”.

Peace in the world is also the peace of water, a guarantee of security and prosperity for all.

Thank you, dear Brazilian friends, and I wish a great success to your work.