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Thank you, good morning, or good afternoon, it depends

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends of water,

On behalf of the World Water Council, I would like first to express my deep appreciation to Encuentro Mundi and REPAM for organizing this forum.

It is a great pleasure and honor to be with you Today for supporting this universal cause of global access to water and sanitation.

Dear friends of water,

I would like to say first that Water is politics.

Water has always been a political issue and, it will be more and more a political issue in the next decades.

As you will all agree, water should be a vehicle for dialogue and peace between nations and men.

But ironically, one should not forget that the word “rival” comes from the Latin “rivalis” - meaning one using the same river as another.

This said, I would like to stress how important political negotiations are key for us to share the flows at all scales, as water can be a source of conflict or tension or peace between men.

And for example, the filling of the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia is the current and the most critical example of a necessary hydro diplomacy, in this concrete example, concerning countries: Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia mostly.

Our daily news keep reminding us that our world is plagued by multiple crises in terms of energy, food, health, climate, and many others.

And each of these crises trigger tensions, either human tensions, ecological, commercial, diplomatic - but in each case, political responses are needed.

- PAUSE -

Nevertheless, said in all languages - WATER IS LIFE!

Either in the Bible or the Koran, the wells in the desert, are the sources that offer nomads places of joy and wonder.

The Koran mentions the word "water" sixty-three times, and thus marks the veneration of which water is the object in the Muslim tradition.

In the Bible, thus the Genesis starts: "When the creation of heaven and earth began...the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters".

All religions emphasize the double nature of water: the spiritual one and material one.

They are unanimous, Water is the source and the driving force of all life.

Yes, water is life, but water is also poverty, water is also injustice and water is sometimes death.

Water as a public good, water is a collective wealth and it shows that it will become more and more a political object.

The water which has given birth, has been progressively ill-treated and misused by mankind.

Because human communities have been careless and short-sighted.

We all have been short-sighted.

- PAUSE-

And we can ask a question:

So, why so much inconsistency and carelessness?

For three main reasons:

First because of a continuous growing demography which is still unstoppable. We have always the same quantity of water on the Earth, but we have more and more inhabitants.

Translated into ever-growing mega-cities, these create new poverty centers in slums and informal settlements.

These megacities have become, year after year, the real “monsters” of modern times.

The second reason is because, too much water, is wasted in too many places.

We have to change our individual behaviors and our public policies for transgenerational solidarity, in order to stop the spoliation of water resources.

The third reason is that the climate debate has overshadowed the real source of the problem - our disposable society - by making it the scapegoat of all our mistakes, human mistakes.

Climate is what His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, calls “the ultimate injustice made to the most vulnerable” all over the world.

And, in spite of all our efforts, water demand keeps growing faster than water offer.

In these conditions, dear friends of water, what can we do to guarantee to all human beings the right to access to water and sanitation in sufficient quantity and quality? ... as *our colleague lawyer had said before*

The right to water is an easy concept to formulate but it is very complex to implement. Our Council has been working on this issue for more than 20 years. Trying to move from the concept to the practical solutions.

Right to water is meaningless without its prerequisite:

ACCESS TO WATER,

What does it mean to have a right to water if we do not have access to water? Access to water is a part of the right to water, the main one. Because billions of people on this planet do not have access to water so they don't have the right to water.

NO ACCESS / NO RIGHT

As I said, we need to move from theoretical position, concept to practical applications. For example, it is very important to have right to water in the Constitution of every country, but it is not sufficient. It also means to have laws guaranteeing a minimum allocation to every household. There is an upper priority and there is a field priority and there is also a social tariffication.

The right to water and access to water are strongly linked to our major concern which is Water security. Water security to fight water scarcity and to guarantee the efficiency of uses.

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

And right to water and water security should not be simply seen and as an abstract concept, a target to be reached among 17 other Sustainable development goals...

No, access to water should be implemented as a daily imperative, a reality of every moment, a need for everyone, a right for all, which requires:

- Securing water for humans and, at the same time, securing water for nature.

- Securing today's water and securing water for tomorrow. This is the question of reservoirs all over the world.
- Securing upstream water and securing downstream water for balanced allocations and combat pollutions.
- Securing the resource, for its protection and for its use, by establishing and strengthening the three pillars of our water house:

KNOWLEDGE
FINANCE
GOVERNANCE

SHARED KNOWLEDGE
INNOVATIVE FINANCE
And
SCALED GOVERNANCE

These three pillars are fully interlinked and paramount.

This is our new challenge. Today's and future challenge.

And to reach this challenge, the technical solutions already exist.

For example, as you know, desalination and water reuse coupled with renewable energies such as solar or wind power, allow millions, thousands of millions of women and men to access water and sanitation.

All this is part of the political action that we must push for.

Taps before guns – this is the political decision that some governments have to take.

So, as I said, Water is politics, Water is everybody's concern, from international organizations, governments of course, but also parliamentarians, basin organizations, local authorities, and citizens.

And this is the main challenge, and the main objective of the next World Water Forum. As you know, the World Water Council is organizing every three years a World Water Forum. The last one took place in Brazil.

The 9th World Water Forum will be organized for the first time in Africa in collaboration with the Republic of Senegal and the City of Dakar. This forum is the most important event in the field of water. More than 10 thousand sometimes 15 thousand delegates participate; the Forum in Brazil gathered over 100 thousand visitors and participants.

Under the theme of “*water security for peace and development*” this next forum in 2021 will be the greatest opportunity for inclusive dialogue among all communities and religions.

We will, probably with your help, take an initiative to organize different meetings between representatives of all religions present around the world.

Together, we have the ambition to go from theoretical solutions to practical responses, from discoveries to implementations, from office work to ground experiments - to give a better meaning and credibility to this Forum.

These hands-on responses are mainly the transfer and the sharing of technological solutions, financial, and institutional ones, which must change the daily life of the poorest.

To win this challenge, we need your collaboration, we need your expertise, and we need your commitment from all of you, from human communities, and from all countries around the world.

We have to blame but we have to also propose solutions and we have to build a positive world, a positive water world.

So, on the road to Dakar, on the road to water access for all, we must bring responses to the most vulnerable, to lead them towards a better future made of solidarity and dignity.

Thank you.