

Speech by Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council

**Opening ceremony of the 9th World water Forum
21 March 2022, Diamniadio**

Your Excellency the President of the Republic, Excellencies Heads of State and Government, Ministers, Ambassadors and heads of organizations, Mayors,

It gives me great pleasure and joy, that I cannot hide, to be back to this beautiful land of Senegal, which I have had the chance to tour for over 40 years, from Podor to Pays Bassari, from Kidira to Touba.

It has been six years since our first meeting, Mr. President, when we agreed to organize this Forum in your country.

The land of Teranga, the land of the cheerful and caring hospitality of Senegal and its peoples.

Some may ask: why this event, why this forum? Yes, why, dear friends, despite difficult international circumstances: the pandemic, border shutdown, economic downturn, conflicts, why are we convening here in Dakar today? Yes, why?

It is because today, my dear friends, water brings us together when it often divides and separates us.

And also because water is much like Man. Like Man, water is a source of life and death.

And whenever water is in danger, so is man. Just like Nature.

Both a paradoxical and unacceptable situation

It is a paradox on this planet where there is sometimes too much water, causing us to suffer from its anger. But often, there is also too little water, and there is men's mounting anger. This is the challenge of the African continent: although Africa has plenty of water, too many Africans are lacking it!

Unacceptable is the distress of hundreds of millions of women and children who each morning and from far too long, have been in search of water that is both too far away and too scarce. For some liters only, for food and hygiene.

My dear friends, the question is self-evident: should we just walk away and pretend to look elsewhere? No.

Should we simply accept it and give in? No, obviously not!

So to progress, we need to assess the causes and responsibilities.

Responsibility: demography and the number of increasing mouths to feed, the thirst of sprawling, uncontrollable and uncontrolled cities.

Combined to this is indeed the legitimate aspiration of current and future generations to enjoy better standards of living, using up vast quantities of water, which as yet are not available. Let us not sell the water house on credit!

Responsibility also lies with the attacks on nature, pollution, deforestation, soil degradation and salinization... as many present and future aggressions that threaten the balance and survival of terrestrial, river and maritime ecosystems. Finally, responsibility lies with the climate, which is raving, and deepening the extremes between floods and droughts.

Yes, responsible for the inefficiency, wastage and mismanagement, leading to devastation and awful water insecurity.

So, now that the facts have been stated and re-stated, let's turn to the future. Let us together shape the future of water.

Let's work together to regain control of the water cycle. We are all here seeking only one thing: that Water, Nature and Man again become inseparable friends.

You might argue that this is a huge task ? It is indeed, but it is a necessary one. You'll add that it needs time..? Of course it does.

So let's speed up, let's move forward. Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, the situation is urgent, let's say it loud and make our voice heard from here in Dakar.

These pressing issues, ladies and gentlemen, compel us to act. It is our duty to take action to implement the priorities we have set.

The first is to ensure the security of water resources all over the world. More water, but better and less consumption. Technology and digital innovation will not do the job alone. Of course, we need to innovate, and keep innovating: pumping, transferring, desalinating, recycling, increasing the amount of water available. But we also need to radically change our uses, our habits and our behavior.

Only then will we be able to share water for Man and Water for Nature, through Nature-based-solutions, which we will be presented during this Forum. Only then will we be able to secure tomorrow's water through a proper use of today's water.

The second obligation follows from the first. We have been insisting for so many years on the fact that the right to water is an indispensable element of human dignity. We maintain that it must be enshrined in the founding texts, in the constitutions of each country, on the walls of our national and local palaces, on the blackboards of our elementary schools. We claim that it is necessary to provide, little by little, a guarantee of a minimum allocation, a daily water supply. But this is not enough, we must do much more. The right to water will only become an everyday reality once we take it upon ourselves to make it enforceable by associating the legislative, executive and judicial powers to this end. This is what the World Water Council is calling for today from everyone here today who shares this desire for justice.

The third obligation pertains to financing. We no longer want to hear the wrong mantra whereby water has no money and money has no water.

First is the debt ! We agree on this point Mr. President, we continue to ask for the cancellation of the water debt for the poorest, States and communities alike. However, we demand immediate reinvestment in essential water and sanitation infrastructures as well as well in maintenance and training.

More than that, we want a "Blue Fund" out of climate financing, a true International Fund for Water Security. Only through massive but controlled financing will we be able to face the food challenge and progressively mobilize hundreds of billions of additional cubic meters.

And it won't be enough ! as we will propose this week, the coupled mobilization of non-conventional water and energy resources will enable the rural and peri-urban world to save money and be self-sufficient, thanks to hybrid financing.

Finally, the fourth obligation is related to the governance of basins, both national and international. Water is not owned by anyone, be it upstream or downstream. There are too much tension and too many conflicts arising from the lack of concerted action.

With due respect for national sovereignty, the World Water Council calls for better rules of mediation. We all seek the peace of shores and not a war of rivers. The example of the management of the Senegal River is a good case in point. Cooperation rather than confrontation will ensure that the land is watered thanks to protected rivers. This is the very essence of the Global Observatory of Water for Peace, Development and Nature, which we propose to create on the occasion of this 9th Forum.

Dear Friends of Water, here are - at the opening of our Forum - some of the topics being tabled for discussion : Security, Right, Financing, Diplomacy.

We need everyone's ideas. Water must unite, not divide.

We are glad that these essential subjects for the future of humanity are being discussed on African soil, in the land of Teranga.

Everyone is needed, but particularly you, the women and you, the youth, who must carry the Future of Water.

We need you to, please, be the Future of Water.

Take it in your hands so that tomorrow, thanks to you, it can be said " When water flows, happiness flows".

Many thanks, to you, Women and the Men of Senegal.

Senegal, we acknowledge your intelligence, we enjoy your elegance.

Diërëdiëf Sénégal, fan bu guud yaw ak sa askan !

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