Speech from Loïc Fauchon, World Water Council President
ICESCO Virtual Conference

"Water Security for Peace and Development in the Islamic World: Preparing for the next 9th World Water Forum, Dakar 2021" held on 27 July 2020

Mr. Prime Minister of Guinea, good morning.
Mr. Minister Serigne Thiam, dear friend, good morning.
Mr. Director-General of ICESCO, good morning to all dear friends of water.

I would also like to greet the collaborators and governors of the World Water Council who are participating in this meeting, in particular Ms. Asma El Kasmi from ONEE and Mr. Ahmet Saatçi who will speak after me.

Thank you to ICESCO, to the Government of Senegal and ONEE for allowing the World Water Council to speak at this conference on water security, a factor of peace and development, since it is the title and the theme that the government of Senegal and the World Water Council have chosen together for the next forum that we are organizing side by side.

On behalf of the World Water Council, I am particularly happy to participate in this conference and to deliver these few words.

Dear friends, the world is thirsty, and the Islamic world is not immune to the thirst that so many countries experience at the same time aridity, drought and insufficient water resources.

This lack of water in the Islamic world is fully highlighted in the preparatory document.

It is no coincidence that the Quran mentions the word "water" sixty three times, and thus marks the veneration of which water is the object in the Muslim tradition. Let us recall here the sura of the prophet who said: "From the water we have made all living things". And about the water said the prophet: "It is nutritious and healing ...". This clearly shows today that there is a relationship between water and food, between water and health. All this after being written centuries ago is now truer than ever.

Ladies and gentlemen, water has two enemies today on the planet and in the Islamic world in particular, the first of these enemies is demography: there will be, we are told, more than nine billion inhabitants on Earth in 2050, and 2050 is tomorrow ...

And then there is the climate where we are told that it will be hotter here or more humid there, and that in any case without knowing precisely what will happen we must as the saying goes " to govern is to foresee ". So, this situation creates difficulties, tensions and sometimes even conflicts in the world, and especially in the countries of the organization of Islamic states.

And then this year, at this moment, we are facing major crises. First it was alluded to by Minister Thiam who said: "There is the health crisis whose effects we see". Much has been said and written, I will not come back to it.

But we will retain from this crisis, that water is the first barrier gesture to fight against the pandemic, especially when water is associated with soap. And then looming, and I would like to stress this point, a very serious food crisis. The data released in recent days by the World Food Program is terrifying. For the African continent alone, more than 110 million people are in a situation of undernutrition, and this is also a consequence of the pandemic, the closure of borders, the impoverishment of the most vulnerable, the weakest, the poorest.

Once again, the poor people are those who suffer disasters. And then also comes, undoubtedly crueller, an economic crisis which will probably be lasting with possible repercussions on the political and social climate of each of our states. So tomorrow we are going to have to find a new balance between water for humans and water for nature, because this is a new issue.

We know that we need to give our children water of the same quality that we received from our parents. Water security, securing water resources is this new sharing between water for humans, water for nature and the protection of biodiversity. And all this is played out against a backdrop of digital and digital evolution. All this is played out in a slow but inevitable process of risk aversion of the populations of this world who ask all political, economic and social leaders to go towards zero risk.

All of this gives us extremely important obligations in three areas: improving governance, ensuring that knowledge is better shared, and finally putting in place the financial mechanisms to make additional investments.

At this moment, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, for his very proactive speech on the cancellation of the debt for the poorest countries, which I hope will allow these countries to reinvest in essential services.

Finally, we are constrained, but it is a good issue to increase the supply of water, because there are not enough, and for that to use the best technologies such as desalination and reuse of wastewater.

Let us thank Morocco for its exceptional efforts in terms of the reuse of wastewater, but also of deeper pumping, of water transfer over greater distances so that water is more available where people are.

And at the same time, we have another obligation. It is the task of controlling the demander for water, of reducing this demand for water, if necessary, at the same time by a good quality of water infrastructure performance, less loss, but also by limiting consumption and by changing the behaviour of our populations so that they are more respectful of the water resource.

All of this means that we must move from what we experienced a few decades ago, from the looting of water to the sharing of water. Sharing between communities, sharing between countries, and from this point of view Senegal's efforts to mark the quality of cross-border relations around the same river are an example to share.

Dear friends, the time of easy water is over, totally over. And this the object, this is the meaning of the next World Water Forum that the World Water Council will organize in partnership with the Government of Senegal.

On this occasion, we must provide answers. The people of the world and of the Islamic world in particular are waiting for the works, the technologies, the advancements that we have developed together to be adapted today on the ground.

This is why we are organizing during this forum in Dakar, a village of responses to show in a very concrete way to the populations but also to the Heads of State and the media, where are the new solutions for water and sanitation.

Dear friends, we know a little more every day that water is political, that water deserves and requires political solutions. And that is why we need the support, the help, the contribution of all, and in particular of ICESCO which I thank for its scientific contribution. But also, of all the members' countries of the Organization of the Islamic States to come to participate in the Forum, to bring their contribution, and I also invite any participant to join the World Water Council on this occasion.

Our objective is to close this forum on peace for human development but also on nature conservation. Peace for Man, Peace for Nature, and I thank you for your contribution and for your availability to bring your support to Senegal and the World Water Council.