Loic Fauchon's Speech at the 6th UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters

New-York, 21 March 2023

Dear President Han Seung Soo,
dear Ministers,
and dear friends of water,

I am pleased and honoured to participate to the 6th UN special thematic session on water and disasters.

In our HELP panel, working as we have done together for years, coming from different countries and organizations, is a very positive and original situation. I am glad that the outcomes of this meeting will be useful for the preparation process of the UN conference on water, which will begin tomorrow.

Ladies, and gentlemen,
The world is going from crisis to crisis. They are political, commercial, diplomatic, military. But also migratory, energetic, health or food-related.

Our behaviour, our mistakes, our selfishness are the main causes of these crisis.
Urbanization is ever-growing and creates cities where poverty is spreading.
And the climate is malfunctioning year after year.

It is mainly because, we, humans, and especially the decision-makers, have become blind when making political, economic and financial decisions with the objective of greater production, but little sharing.
We left all natural resources unprotected and water is one of those natural resources.
Our collective and individual responsibility is to secure water availability.
If we do not guarantee water security, we condemn entire populations to stay out of development and basic human rights.
Water crisis are sometimes due to overabundant water. And sometimes due to lack of water with repeated droughts. And in both cases, they are accompanied by giant pollutions, which are mega-poisons.

Water scarcity, as a water related disaster, affects some 2 to 3 billion people worldwide. As many as those affected by excess water.

WORLD WATER COUNCIL

But today, I would like to underline that one of the main consequences from water related disasters, be it floods or droughts, is a major global food crisis to come.
It is an emergency challenge: water for food is missing !

The lack of water security combined with demographic growth, and the abandon of rural areas development, immediately impact the lack of food production for billions of human beings.
It is a water-for-food crisis, unfortunately a major water related disaster to come.

The role and responsibility of our Panel is to look at his situation which directly affect agriculture with the same attention.

These are the reasons why we must concentrate our will and our efforts to provide water security.
Everywhere, for us all, and by us all !

Provide water security means first, securing availability and protection of water resources.
Provide water security everywhere means establishing a balance between water for today and water for tomorrow.
To attain such goals, all our efforts should focus on two essential aspects :
First produce more resources and second consume less.

Producing larger quantities of water requires the use of the latest technologies. In particular, desalination of oceans and brackish water, recycling of waste water, and pumping in the gigantic reservoir of groundwaters.
To guarantee its availability and improve access to water, we must increase our capacity in making water and sanitation benefit from the digital revolution which is happening now.
Digital technologies can be integrated at any step of the water cycle to improve the water's value chain.
Using advances in science and technology is a first step.

Another essential step is the affirmation of a new paradigm: we need to give priority to this new balance between water for Humans and for Nature.
Respect for biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystems is a matter of the same balance. It reflects the same priorities as those of the uses of water for human beings, whether agricultural, domestic or industrial.

Humankind and nature are both travelling on the same boat named "future".

This brings me to make two recommendations :

The first concerns the relationship between urban and rural. The trend, the action, the money, today, are all going towards smart cities. Megacities that are developing very quickly are too often receptacles of poverty and ignorance, while we should be able to speak of water access and progress for sanitation.

But, dear friends, who bears the weight of nature conservation, of protecting the resource and of producing food ?
It is in rural territories that we ensure water, sanitation, food, energy and health security.
Without protecting and cultivating land, without farmers and foresters, how will cities live ? How long will they survive ?
We advocate for smart rural areas and for rural vitality, as opposed to what urban world dictates. It is also a priority to mitigate the disasters of migration.

The second recommendation concerns water conservation.
Our planet is partly lacking water reserves. It lacks water from one season to the next. From one year to the next, from one region to another.

We have an immense need for new water reserves. The concept of dams must evolve. It is no longer a question of blocking the flow of water.
We need new types of reservoirs, which we call “aquatic reserves”. They are made to protect biodiversity to foster human progress, harmony of life, and protection of fauna and flora.

Dear colleagues and friends,

Avoiding or mitigating water-related disasters means first consuming less and consuming better. And this will become the rule of our daily life.
This is true for water, energy, food and health. For the future of humanity, it is a question of saving water to share prosperity! Because protecting and respecting water means providing food, health, energy, education and therefore development and peace.

Thousands of solutions and concrete responses will drive the future of water. In New York tomorrow, and in Bali in a year's time for the 10th World Water Forum, we are committed to highlight these local, citizen and solidarity-based actions which give a human face to better access to water for all.

About innovations, financing and governance, we know the solutions. What is still missing is social responsibility to make better choices and prioritize "taps before guns".

It is above all a question of political will and decision. This is why we say "Water is Politics" over and over again.