



Special Session on Transversality / IWRM

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Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council

Dear colleagues, dear friends of water,

15 years ago, my wife and I visited a primary school in the middle of the Rajasthan desert, in the west of India.

I showed my left hand to the children, and we told them: look, each finger represents an essential service for your lives. One finger for water, one for energy, one for health, another one for food, and finally one for your education.

It is on that day that the term Five Fingers Alliance was born, the example that water is never alone.

Water is present in all religions and mentioned as the origin of all life.

And today, water is growth, water is development.

But above all water is Humanity, and at the same time Water is Nature.

Only Water leads to peace. Water is the first element to give dignity and respect to human beings.

And to Nature, Water brings balance between fauna and flora, between animals and plants.

For several decades, we have gotten used to organizing water management vertically, in a series of silos, which we called “Integrated Water Resources Management”.

This is still necessary to talk about water security, innovation, financing, governance. However, it is not enough.

Because access to water and to energy is the same battle.

Because neither water nor energy alone suffice without the ability to produce sustenance.

Because there is no purpose in feeding populations if they are left to die from water related diseases.

Because when the earth is thirsty, men are hungry.

Because education unlocks people's ability to become stewards for natural resources and actors of their own development.

These lessons together provide the basis for what I have called the Five Fingers Alliance, a horizontal and multisectoral approach, which is truly the societal fuel for resilience.

Furthermore, this horizontal approach also shows us the importance of rural areas!

Beyond securing the resource, we maintain that sustainable advocacy should concern the vitality of rurality as opposed to what the urban world dictates.

Let us not forget that if we provide water services to rural populations, we will succeed in slowing down the rural exodus to the cities and especially to the megacities.

Rural populations are the first producers and protectors of surface water and groundwater alike. And it is for that reason that we must stop opposing urban dwellers and rural populations.

So that is the story, these are the reasons why already five years ago, in Beyrouth, Rabi and I have decided to work on this cross-cutting issue.

It was more than time that we stopped addressing water issues in silos.

It was more than time to start approaching water in a more cross-cutting way.

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank Rabi Mohtar for accepting this journey and thank him for his tenacity, because Covid happened right in the middle, so it was five long years.

I would also like to thank his team and the Task Force, thank you also to the World Water Council's staff, to Catherine Lagarde and Mariem Khemiri who made this publication possible.

Let us applaud this work which benefited from Rabi's experience and work, and from the knowledge of the Texas University and San Antonio stakeholders.

This report reviews various water management implementation projects. It then presents a new vision for water management based on pluri-disciplinary

approaches for water and the interdependencies between food, energy, health, and education.

A new vision for the future.

Thank you again Rabi, and congratulations for helping the great family of water.