Stockholm World Water Week 2019

"Transforming societies to meet the SDGs: The role of finance"
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OPENING REMARKS

Speech of Mr. Loïc Fauchon

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Dear friends,

Welcome, and thank you for being here and for participating in our seminar on Financing water.

This topic of Financing water is obviously an essential subject to improve the access to water and sanitation for billions of people who lack access to crucial services necessary for life and for dignity.

However, let’s not forget that money alone is not enough to provide that access. For the house of water to have sustainable foundations, there must be three solid and deep pillars.

Indeed, beyond the finance, there must also be knowledge sharing and good governance. If one of those pillars is missing, access to water will neither be fair nor equitable.

The World Water Council has always given great importance to the subject of financing water.

The Council is neither a donor nor an investor. It is simply the federation of 400 international organizations from over 60 countries. But most of the important donors (development banks, bilateral agencies, countries or federations of countries, foundations and local authorities) are members of the Council.

Everyone here knows that for several decades, the demand for water has been increasing in volume. For the moment, it is not due to climate change, which is “the ultimate injustice that will hit the poorest” according to the King of Morocco.

It is first due to demographic growth and all the negative impacts it engenders. Urban growth, rural exodus, giant slums, coastalization, pollution of rivers and seas, all of that is due to wild and unbridled demographic pressure.

Increase supply and regulate demand, this is the challenge, which is at the same time global, regional and local.

We need, at the same time, to invest, but also maintain, and renew infrastructure and equipment. But we also need to train the men and women who ensure water services everywhere.

All of this costs money. And it is expensive, especially in countries that have too much or too little water. Because we have to secure water more and more and have enough resources to ensure water security. It is costly to implement human ingenuity: huge water

transfers; deep drilling; major reservoirs; desalination; and today, wastewater re-use.

It requires money, a lot of money, more and more money.

The question of this seminar is not simply knowing how to “Transform Societies to meet the SDGs”. The real question is what level of priority human societies are ready to give to water and sanitation?

What is the point of having Sustainable Development Goals dedicated to water if no State, no international organizations, no banks, no local authorities, are making this subject their main priority, along with access to energy?

How can we imagine human communities having access to or maintaining a high standard of development if we do not establish a public service for water that is for everyone, that is equitable, in sufficient quantity and quality, and at an acceptable price by all and for all?

Water everywhere, and for everyone.

All of this makes water a highly political subject.

Yes, Water is Politics.

That is why a strong signal of commitment from the highest level of national and international political governance is indispensable to set the tone and increase financing flows for water resources security and management. Decision makers at all levels have to assume their responsibilities.

The World Water Council wants to pursue its contribution to the improvement of water financing.

It is in that spirit that I would like to propose for your consideration a few recommendations and suggestions to bring out concrete solutions and answers to the issues that we are facing on the ground.

1. Erase the “water debt” in the 50 countries where access to water lacks the most, under the condition that each country will dedicate the same amount to actions in favor of water.

2. Encourage national governments to establish principles of sub-sovereignty (decentralization) to give local and regional authorities the possibility to go on the international market for water related loans.

3. Promote the idea that urban resilience will evolve as territorial resilience by including rural areas which still represent 50% of the world's population. Smart cities yes, but smart rural areas as well;

4. Insist on the obligation that we now have to work horizontally by associating water with other essential services. We can do this by going beyond the concept of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) toward a five-finger alliance including water, energy, food, health, education. And give bonuses to projects that integrate these different sectors.

5. Systematically grant a financing bonus for sanitation projects in order to progress on sanitation goals as they are still lagging behind.

6. Make it mandatory for each investment project to foresee the dedication of 20% of the budget for maintenance of equipments and training of people responsible for the work.

7. Raise awareness among Parliaments and Parliamentarians on the major role they play in voting laws and budgets related to water.

8. Define clearly the role of local, provincial and regional authorities in terms of institutional competences and allow them to channel a part of their budget (1% for instance) to international cooperation actions.

9. Encourage the creation of independent budgets for water and sanitation for States and municipalities in order to respect the principle of “water pays water”, in order to provide greater transparency on the use of revenues and expenses.

10. Knowing the need to raise awareness for a better prioritization on water and sanitation issues, the need for a simplification of the

financing mechanisms, and a clarification of the actors' mandates, the World Water Council will take the initiative to organize in 2020 specific conferences targeted towards funders, parliamentarians and local authorities.

Those are just a few suggestions for discussions and to translate into practical initiatives for water.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a fruitful conference.