

Opening Second Stakeholder Consultation Meeting of the 11th World Water Forum

By Loic Fauchon Jeddah - 28 of June, 2026.

Your Royal Highness Prince Saud bin Mishaal bin Abdulaziz,

Excellency Minister Abdulrahman bin Abdulmohsen Al-Fadli,

Excellencies Ministers, Ambassadors,

Dear friends,

Why are we gathered here in the beautiful and ancient city of Jeddah?

Please let me ask the question !

Obviously, because on our way to Riyadh and the 11th Forum, we are entering the final stage, the development of the various processes that are the very heart, I would even say the driving force, of the great gathering.

And of course, during these turbulent times in the Middle East, I would like both to thank our Saudi colleagues and friends for their warm hospitality and also to reassure them once again for our heartfelt solidarity, both now and in the future. We hope that the time of taps will replace the time of guns, here in this region, and across the world.

Yes, we are here to hold the Second Stakeholder Consultation Meeting. And the key word, Ladies and Gentlemen, is CONSULTATION. We, the Saudi Authority and the World Water Council together, are here to listen, to hear opinions, criticisms, and above all the proposals that the great water family, both Saudi and from all over the world, will bring to the Forum's table.

Because today and tomorrow, and especially in the weeks and months to come, we, the co-organizers of the 11th Riyadh Forum, will draw on the expertise, experiences, and success stories that flow across the global water sector.

It is our duty, dear Friends.



It is our commitment to make the next Forum a success, to put forward engagement and activate solutions.

To foster innovation, share governance, diversify funding, to strengthen three core priorities: health, food, and nature, in their deep connection with unconventional and renewable water and energy.

In this spirit the World Water Council has launched several initiatives and proposals: a coalition for water in megacities, an international center for unconventional water resources, a laboratory for sobriety, a new deal for sanitation, and a «One Water, One Health» alliance.

Yes, dear friends, consulting, listening, engaging in dialogue, proposing, deciding, is in our roadmap.

This is our role and, I would even say, our duty.

But we must aim higher and go further, and ask ourselves every day not only why we are here, but also for whom we are working?

The Chinese philosopher Laozi, in the Daodejing, the founding text of Taoism, writes: «Water surpasses us, and we will never be able to grasp its full mystery». And somehow, the mystery of water leads us to what he calls «the gateway to understanding».

At the same time, let us turn to the verse 30 of the Surah of the Prophets, which says: «From water We have constituted every living thing».

Yes, for whom do we work, for whom do we act? It is an essential question. First and foremost, for the people whose dignity is hurt by being denied access to water and its benefits.

The people who walk long distances to reach a well, a water point, and keep waiting there with no guarantee of obtaining that precious liquid.

The people who, deprived of toilets, are forced into open defecation and lose all privacy.

The people who have no clean water to cook a little food, wash their clothes, or quench their thirst, living in permanent fear of tomorrow.

The people who are regularly confronted by flash floods that devastate homes and fields, by droughts that burn harvests and wipe out livestock, the people whose feverish eyes are condemned to the slums of megacities.

The people who cannot afford to pay for water and who endure that humiliation.



Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are working and taking action for them, for the people whose dignity has been struck. The dignity of a people, of a community, of a family, and of individuals.

Collective dignity and individual dignity.

Yes, beyond technology, governance, and finance, beyond «Preserve, Reserve, Serve», we work to restore hope and dignity to thousands of people in their relationship with water.

Yes, dear friends, water is a powerful and enduring source of dignity.

And to provide water, is to bring dignity to the most disadvantaged, the most vulnerable, and the poorest. This is the very reason for our presence here in Jeddah, tomorrow in Riyadh, and everywhere in the world.

Yes, let's make clean water as universal as the mobile phones, let's place water at the very top of every agenda, and in these troubled times, let's prioritize taps over guns, drones, and missiles.

This is clearly a societal and political necessity. It is clearly a hydro-diplomatic commitment to ease tensions in transboundary river basins.

Remember, since the Bali Forum, we decided to be peaceful «Water Warriors».

Today, I am saying let us also be «Dignity Defenders».

Let us inspire, build, and proclaim that water is essential to dignity, and that gaining access to the dignity of water is the best path, the finest road, toward peace and prosperity. Let us move forward with courage, because, dear friends, there is neither intelligence nor dignity without courage, what I would call the courage of water.

Yes, Water Dignity and Water Courage together.

With our Saudi friends and colleagues, we trust that this 2nd Stakeholders Consultation Meeting will be a success on the road to Riyadh.

Together make the kingdom of Saudi Arabia the world capital of water.

Shukran