

**5th WORLD WATER FORUM
ISTANBUL
16 – 22 MARCH 2009**

OPENING CEREMONY

**Speech by Mr. Loïc FAUCHON
President of the World Water Council**

«Check against delivery »

Your Excellency the President of the Republic,
Excellencies, Heads of State, heads of Governments

Honorable Ministers
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends from Turkey and elsewhere.

While I declare open this 5th World Water Forum, allow me Mr. Kadir Topbas, Mayor of Istanbul, Mr. Minister Veysel Eroglu, Mr. the President of the Republic, to express to you on behalf of all the participants, our pleasure to be in Istanbul for the week ahead.

Allow me to thank each and every one of you, as well as all those who have taken an active part in the organization of this Forum. But all the more so thank the peoples of Turkey, and most particularly the inhabitants of Istanbul, for their untold welcome and home spun hospitality.

We are particularly touched by this successful and ongoing combination of skill and kindness, so typical to the Turkish soul and way of life. It has to a great extent contributed to the resounding success of this Forum, for the great benefit of the cause of water the world over.

Dear friends, dear participants to this 5th Forum, hailing from over 180 countries, welcome to the Sütluce and Feshane convention centers.

We have convened here to make heard the voices of all those who want to address the challenges of a world where we will be finally living in harmony with nature..... in harmony with the air we breathe, in harmony with the energy we generate, in harmony with the water we drink.

All of us here do know that the road leading to access to water is a long one. It is nevertheless a duty and an honour for us to spur dialogue, listen to and meet all relevant stakeholders to reach this legitimate target.

We live in a fast-changing world, sometimes all too sharply, and water is therefore impacted adversely by these changes.

However, every day we need more water to produce food to meet the demands of an additional one billion people every ten years.

Every day we need more water to generate the energy needed for development.

Every day we need better-quality water to defuse the health threats induced by outright absent or inadequate sanitation requirements of a large number of mega cities.

Every day we must protect water in order to respect the biodiversity of ecosystems.

Because we are responsible.

Responsible for the aggressions perpetrated against water, responsible for the current climate changes which come on top of the global changes, responsible for the tensions which reduce the availability of fresh water masses, so indispensable to the survival of humanity.

At this very time in the history of water, we are faced with a major challenge: to use more water resources but at the same time to protect, enhance the value of and even reuse these waters.

Water uses are not confined to humans alone. Hence a harmonious, albeit rigorous, sharing of water must be reached and maintained.

A sharing that is difficult to reach? Yes, but an exciting responsibility which gathers the family of water together in this formidable reunion, which is the world water forums.

An immense responsibility for us, for you policy makers and international decision-makers, who know now that the future of water does not only rest on technological progress, but also and mostly on political commitments.

Today water is at the centre of political discussions, and your presence, Mr. the President of the Republic, Excellencies, Heads of Governments , Ministers adding up to some 140 ministerial delegations, your presence among us here in Istanbul, speaks loudly of the more and more important place and role given to water on the planetary agenda .

Water claims your attention, but it does also need your respect and ongoing support. The World Water Council, whose principal function and rationale are the water, is here to recall this fact at all times.

This is why again and again in the future you will be called upon to increase the volume of the water resources necessary for the world growth.

For a long time to come still, rivers, lakes and ground waters will be used more and more to quench the ever-increasing thirst of the planet.

We will still for a long period of time have to store water, pump it, transfer it, desalinate it and recycle it, thanks to the technological progress secured by the human genius, and which we must more than ever before encourage and foster.

But indefinitely increasing the water supply comes at a cost, which is much higher against the current background of climate change and financial crisis.

Increasing the water supply jeopardizes the natural environment, especially when human beings fail to strike a fair balance between the interests of meeting the essential needs and the “looting” of hydrological resources.

We are behaving more and more unreasonably and inconsequentially. Can we still continue to ask our governments to meet our demands in water, by continuing to create more equipment and infrastructures? Let’s stop spending always more and more money to produce water and then waste it as we are doing.

Yes my dear friends, we have to face it, the time of water come easy is over.

The era of extravagant consumption of water resources is over, at a time of social tariff setting to protect the poorest.

The times when leaks would remain unattended are over, particularly in this era of unacceptable water shortage.

The time to adopt the principle of virtual water has now come, for this is the only way to reduce our hydrological footprint.

It is only by changing our perception of and rethinking our relationship with water that we will be in a position to reconcile ourselves with it.

Here, in this marvellous city of Istanbul, all through the week, it is our responsibility - if not duty - to bridge divides for water / “Jeter des Ponts sur l’Eau” / “farklilikların suda birlemesi”. These bridges, as many as they are, are as many solutions that are sustainable, meaningful, interdependent, which the “casualties” of water have been hoping for some time now.

The Bosphorus is quite wide, and these bridges are indeed difficult to build, you would be tempted to say. It is true. But this city, which is the cradle of several histories and the meeting point of so many civilizations, blazes the trail. Not only because the bridges are bringing together

two continents, and so many peoples, cultures and religions. But mostly because Turkey, the great nation of water, is telling how strong humanity is when it puts its knowledge at the service of overarching and just causes.

Yes ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, together let's stride across the chasms of ignorance, of injustice, of poverty, together let's bring the shores of knowledge closer, as well as those of right, of wealth and good governance.

Let's build the bridge of right, simply because this is the right to dignity and that dignity is not negotiable. This means the recognition of the right to water and to sanitation in the legislations of all countries. This also implies minimal water allocations for those most in need, drinking water supply for the populations living in unregulated housing districts, the compulsory creation of water supply points and of sanitary facilities in all public buildings and as a matter of priority to schools. Let's commit ourselves now, for time is of the essence.

Let's build the bridge of knowledge for a generalized mutualization of knowledge to the service of water. This means the use of adapted technologies. Because an adapted knowledge is one for which ownership is a condition precedent.

This also means the provision of schools, in the North as well as in the South, in the East as well as in the West, to train the technicians and the managers needed for water and sanitation services. Several maintenance universities have been created at our behest since the Mexico Forum. There are still dozen others to build still. So let's get down to it! Let's commit ourselves to do it! Let's not procrastinate anymore.

Let's proceed across the bridge to raise the money indispensable for water and sanitation.

This implies the condonation of debts and the reallocation as a matter of priority to the financing of water-related infrastructures.

The setting up of a facility for the payment of the energy needed for water generation in the poorest regions.

The application of a moratorium on the increase of the price of energy for water along with the creation of green gas oil or again the introduction of a tax on oil revenues.

Let's innovate in the field of financing. Let's give them local legitimacy, through microfinance initiatives and a solidarity born out of decentralized cooperation.

Let's commit ourselves to action! Let's do it here and now.

Let's make the bridge of governance stronger, because water needs institutions that are legitimate. This implies a most balanced distribution of roles between governments, parliaments, watershed agencies and local governments.

Consensus-building is also a must, so as to reconcile citizens and users with water, thereby fostering transparency and skill development.

All of this is ready. All the stakeholders are by the way present in Istanbul, to put this into practice. Hundreds of parliamentarians are to create a Help Desk geared to strengthen the sharing of experiences in furtherance of an immediate legislative action plan. Mayors and local elected representatives are committing in large numbers to embark on a more efficient management through the Istanbul Water Consensus.

Not to forget the thousands of professionals, NGOs and civil society representatives, who have made it to Istanbul to share with us their field experience.

All of them have already committed themselves. Let's join them! Let's not wait any further.

And still many other bridges to cross: that of transboundary basins to reach the water truce and strengthen the cooperation, that of sanitation in order to curb water-borne diseases and sufferings, that of energy, which is necessary to secure access to water.

Then yes, let's lay bridges everywhere for water. Let's lay more and more bridges to link the two banks of a river where the future generations will come to drink. Let's erect these bridges with as much tolerance as intelligence. True, this will require time. Then let's take it. But let's commit ourselves as of now, and without further ado. Let's become responsible water users and advocates for ecowatch.

By laying these many bridges, we contribute a great deal to bridging the gap between ideas, we bring people closer and promote further their ability to build the home of water in mutual tolerance and active solidarity.

Thank you, your Excellencies, for your presence which speaks loudly of your support to the everyday actions of the World Water Council. My thanks also go to our Turkish friends, for your kind welcome, untold hospitality and last but not least your expertise. My heartfelt thanks are directed to you President Gül, Mr. Minister Eroglu, Mr. Mayor Topbas. On behalf of all the participants, let me express our utmost respect and gratitude. Let prosperity and peace embrace Istanbul forever, as well as Turkey and the entire Turkish nation.

LONG LIVE TURKEY, AND VERY FRUITFUL PROCEEDINGS TO YOU ALL