



3rd Global Water Security Seminar

11 September 2023, Beijing

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Excellencies,

Dear Friends of water,

The World Water Council and myself are delighted to be taking part in the organization of this seminar, physically present in the beautiful city of Beijing. And it is an honor to speak to you this afternoon together with my colleagues and ministerial friends from the government of China and the government of Indonesia.

Securing our water resources is the basis of all our development policies and, at the same time, it is a necessity for our nature conservation obligations. This is the reason why, as I said this morning, the theme of the congress - harmony between humans and nature - is particularly welcome.

It is particularly well adapted to the current situation of our world which is undergoing major changes and causing serious threats to our planet's natural resources. Climate is of course one of these threats, but demographics and the pressure of urbanization are others, just as worrying. In line with this, the Chinese government and the World Water Council share the desire for joint responses.

This is the meaning of the "China in action" policy program that you presented to us at the New York UN conference. This is the meaning of the "Water Deal" that I spoke about this morning at the opening of the IWRA World Congress.

For 15 years, China and the World Water Council have shared a common history based on the acceptance of 2 words: DIALOGUE and COOPERATION.

Dialogue, because with consideration and dialogue, we know how to listen to each other. Cooperation, because beyond words, we are convinced that action is needed. Joint action, as illustrated by the new agreement signed on Saturday between our 2 institutions.

This afternoon, our work is about 4 major issues which are at the heart of water security. 4 words can summarize them: Law, uses, nature and hydro-diplomacy.

I would like to say a few words about these essential subjects.

First of all, Law is a long-lasting advocacy issue for the World Water Council and we have been expressing our position for many years. There are 2 aspects to guarantee the right to water for all. The first aspect, which is also a great policy and technical challenge, is how to provide real access to water to communities with sufficient quantity and sanitary quality, everywhere and at any time. The second aspect is linked to the individual nature of the right, enabling each person to have a minimum allocation of water at an affordable price. To reach this purpose, the World Water Council has been advocating for many years that, as an individual human right, the right to access to water (and sanitation) should be recognized in national constitutions. Some of them have already made it. But we are now going a step further today by proposing the idea of an enforceable right, in order to make it a public obligation liable to court action.

About the different uses of water, I would just like to reiterate our concern about water for food. This is the global priority of the very next future, and a challenge for humanity. First and foremost, we need to strengthen our capacity for innovation to increase agricultural production in line with ongoing population growth.

As far as Nature is concerned, there is clearly a new balance to be determined between water needs for human activity and necessary water preservation for the survival of species and biodiversity. To reach it we will diversify, accelerate and intensify all kinds of nature-based solutions, notably for ponds, lakes and rivers.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Governors, I would like to stress the importance of international relations in the field of water. This is what enables us to share thoughts and actions. And also, to put forward concrete, sustainable solutions.

It is a great opportunity to develop hydro-diplomacy based on consensus. Within national or international relationships, hydro-diplomacy allows to reduce tensions over the availability of resources.

This is also the desire of our Chinese colleagues expressed in their statement on "the guidance of overall national diplomacy and foreign aid strategy".

We welcome this will to boost cooperation with water-related international organizations, including the World Water Council.

Together we want to promote international exchange platforms. And this what World Water Forums are all about, including the 10th Forum, which we are co-organizing with our Indonesian colleagues and friends. And I know that China will be taking an active part next May 2024 and will present China water success stories.

Let us all contribute to the preparation of the 10th World Water Forum.

We are looking forward to meeting you again in Bali next May.

Thank you for your attention.