

Written press and online media

- La Provence 22/3/19 | Water, a precious but terribly unequal resource / Interview with Loïc Fauchon “We need to start building dams again”
<https://www.laprovence.com/article/edition-marseille/5422202/leau-un-bien-precieux-et-terriblement-inegalitaire.html>
- Var Matin 22/3/19 | Column written by Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council: “World Water Day – What Have You Done?”
- Marcelle Media 22/3/19 | “Water scarcity – it can be managed”
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Audio / Video

- Europe 1 *Le Grand Journal du Soir* 22/3/19 | Script : Interview with Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council
<https://www.europe1.fr/emissions/votre-grand-journal-du-soir-avec-matthieu-belliard/matthieu-belliard-220319-3878840> (*from 1:07:58 onwards*)
- France Info / France Inter 22/3/19 | Script: Interview with Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council

Friday 22 March 2019

La Provence

The logo for La Provence, featuring the text "La Provence" in white on a blue rectangular background with a thin red underline.

<https://www.laprovence.com/article/edition-marseille/5422202/leau-un-bien-precieux-et-terriblement-inegalitaire.html>

Water, a precious but terribly unequal resource

More than two billion people worldwide don't have access to quality water

Water is a precious resource. Incredibly precious. It is essential to life: without it, everything falls apart. However, we still aren't giving water the respect it deserves. Wasted in the developed world, it ends up contaminated in the developing world owing to a lack of purification facilities. Today, on World Water Day, it is more important than ever to remind ourselves of just how central water is to the concept of sustainable development, helping to reduce poverty levels, boost economic growth and protect the environment. And yet there are currently more than two billion people worldwide living without access to water.

These types of water shortages primarily affect the very poorest countries in the world, but they also affect those left behind in the West, where poverty continues to grow. They too know how difficult it can be to access not just water (*read the interview below with Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council*) but the dignity that comes with it.

Confronted with this stark reality, World Water Day chose as its theme "*Leaving no-one behind*". This phrase sums up a major target set for 2030: granting access to water – and to sustainable management of drinkable water resources – to billions of people who, whether at home, at school, on the farm or in factories, still have no access to it and are forced to fight just to survive and to develop.

"The right to drinking water and sanitation is a human right" – the UN

Among these groups, some are more poorly served than others. Women, children, refugees, indigenous peoples and even people with disabilities are often neglected and can be targeted with discrimination when they try to access drinkable water.

As if that wasn't enough, this type of discrimination can be aggravated by other factors such as environmental degradation, climate change, population growth, conflict, forced displacement and migration.

We see, therefore, that being able to access water is not easy, and nor is it a guarantee. This despite the UN stating in 2010 that "*the right to drinking water and sanitation is a human right, essential to full enjoyment of life and to an individual being able to exercise all of their human rights*". We are still a long way away from this. Access to drinking water in sufficient quantities that is physically accessible and of an acceptable quality is a luxury that only wealthier people enjoy. Poorer people, meanwhile, are forced to make do with poor quality water that comes at a high price. This World Water Day is therefore a timely reminder of just how unequal our planet is in this regard, and how important it is to take immediate action. 2030 is just around the corner.

F.C.

The water crisis

2.1 billion people have no access to drinking water at home

One out of every four primary schools has no drinking water

80% of people worldwide who use water that is unfit for consumption and unprotected sources live in rural environments

For the 68.5 million people who have been forced to flee their homes, access to drinking water is a huge issue

700 million people worldwide could be displaced as a result of increased water shortages between now and 2030

The most fortunate people have access to high-quality water services, sanitation and hygiene

Poorer people pay a much higher price for a service that is the same or even worse

Nearly 4 billion people (nearly two thirds of the world's population) have been faced with serious water shortages for at least one month over the course of the year

Each day, more than 700 children under the age of five die from diarrhoea caused by unsanitary water or a lack of sanitation

More than 800 women die each day from complications that occur during pregnancy or labour

THE INTERVIEW with Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council

“We need to start building dams again”

What are the biggest challenges lying in wait for the planet when it comes water?

These challenges aren't lying in wait – they're already here. Although sections of the world are faced with droughts, sufficient quantities of water are there – the problem is that the water isn't where people need it to be, for use in agriculture, in industry and at home. This is why countries sometimes transfer water from one region to another, not primarily to tackle issues surrounding changes to the climate, but rather to tackle demographic issues. By 2030, it is estimated that two thirds of the world's population will live in cities, with this rising to 80% by 2050. These levels of urban growth are not inevitable, but this is the biggest problem facing humanity given everything else that comes with it: poverty, the accumulation of enormous shanty towns, all sorts of pollution and the proliferation of plastic in both freshwater and saltwater, in our rivers and in our seas. This is going to be a really complex problem, but one that the planet will need to find a solution to.

What about climate change?

To these challenges we can, of course, add climate change, which remains uncertain given that it is based on mathematical models. That said, we do have one marker that is beyond question: the steady melting of the two poles.

The theme of World Water Day is “Leaving no-one behind”. What can we do here to make this a reality?

We are fortunate here in Provence to have water security, and this is because of the huge dams and water distribution canals that were built in the 1950s. We now have to find a way of ensuring everyone has this same level of access. And yet, with rising poverty levels in the Western world, the issue is now finding a way of bringing water to people who have “no right” to it. “No right” because they have no address, no contract, or because they live far from a water source. As such, there is a lot of work still to be done in order to ensure everyone has access to water and its corollary, sanitation. In the developing world, where the issue is a lack of direct access to water, water shortages are defined as not having water in sufficient quantities and at a sufficient level of quality in order to be able to live, eat, wash, etc. Access to water means being able to live with dignity. Hundreds of millions of people are currently forced to defecate outdoors for their entire lives, which is an affront to human dignity.

Is it fair to say that consuming dirty water currently kills more people than conflict?

It’s true, and this is why we need ever closer ties between water and the energy needed to pump and treat water. The two have become inextricably linked when it comes to health, nutrition and education, which is why, particularly for schools in Africa, we support the “five fundamental rights”: water, electricity, food, health and education.

In order to tackle water shortages, should we not start building dams again?

We absolutely should. Even in France, we don’t have enough water storage capacity, this despite the fact that we need to store water during the winter in order to ensure that we have enough in the summer. In August 2018, 70 French *départements* out of 101 were forced to introduce water-saving measures. That tells you there’s a problem. We therefore need to create a new generation of “smart” dams, capable of preserving biodiversity by preventing useful land from being taken up. Water storage and the production of electricity from water via reservoir dams are both essential in the context of “water security” and will be vital when it comes to tackling climate change, demographic changes and rising living standards, which bring with them increased consumption of water.

In such a context, is there a risk of “water wars”?

There are around 270 cross-border basins worldwide, including the Ganges, the Mekong, the Nile and the Amazon, and this often leads to tensions. As the World Water Council, it is our job to find solutions and to act as a mediator, as we did between Turkey, Syria and Iraq and as we are aiming to do for the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the White Nile, which could have significant consequences for water supplies in Sudan and Egypt. This is causing tensions to rise, given that this dam could take between 8 and 12 years to fill. For those countries downstream, this could result in less water being allocated and the introduction of water restrictions. That said, irrespective of the basin in question, I don’t believe this will lead to war. It never has in the past, even when tensions were high. In order to prevent that from happening in the future, we will need to strengthen water security and to diversify water intake by taking water from rivers and transferring, desalinating and reusing waste water through technological advances. This will be the revolution of this century.

Interview by Frédéric Cheutin

Friday 22 March 2019

Marcelle Media

<http://marcelle.media/2019/03/22/leau-ce-nest-pas-le-climat-lhomme-sait-gerer-encore-faut-il-que/>

The logo for Marcelle Media, featuring the word "Marcelle" in a stylized, blue, cursive font with a horizontal line above the letters.

Water scarcity – it is manageable

By Olivier Martocq, journalist

Managing to get water on the agenda at *la conférence de prévision de Marcelle* for 22nd March, World Water Day, was not a matter of course. The concern illustrated by the youth climate strikes, the threat of water stress in France and the discovery that the headquarters of the World Water Council are located in Marseille were three good reasons to dip our toes in the water to find out the temperature. With, as an introduction, an opinion piece written by the president of this international institution, recognised by the UN but relatively unknown here, despite grouping together 400 organisations from 50 different countries.

In France, water is not expensive

3.40 euros incl. tax for 1,000 litres in Marseille, 4 euros in Nice, slightly more than that in Saint-Malo given the density of nitrates in the water table: the water coming out of our taps is among the cheapest in Europe. On average, households spend one euro per day in order to drink, wash, cook and...to water their plants. *“The price of a litre of this H₂O, despite having undergone a treatment process in order to render it drinkable, is 300 times less expensive than the water sold in plastic bottles”*, explains Sophie Vague, head of communication at *La Société des Eaux de Marseille* (SEM - the Marseille Water Company).

Because water is considered as being a bare necessity, assistance is there for people who might not be able to pay for it, including the *Access Eau* fund, which is given a million euros each year by the city council.

But we are starting to see shortages...

At the end of September 2018, 143 prefectural decrees were in force across 62 French *départements*, imposing water restrictions. In order to keep prices low, and above all else to continue to enjoy an abundance of water, supplies need to be stored more effectively, with less waste on networks. It will also be necessary to retreat water from water treatment plants and to render it safe for consumption. 30 years after Tunisia and Morocco, pioneers in the field, France is looking at ways of recovering its waste water in order for it to be reused, as opposed to it being released into rivers or the sea.

The solution is there

“The problem is not technological, but rather legal and, more than anything else, psychological”, explains Loïc Fauchon, president of the World Water Council. In France, there have been no changes to the legislation, which means that people are not allowed to water their tomatoes using water from a water treatment plant, even if it meets all of the requisite hygiene conditions. *“The thing is, the water from these treatment plants will be so heavily scrutinised that it could even be better than water from rivers or sources, or even groundwater polluted by nitrates and other PCBs (Ed.: polychlorinated biphenyls, toxic compounds) such as those found in the Rhône, for example. “The*

treatment of waste water is currently marginal - one litre for 10,000 - but the technology is there, and this could be a solution that enables us to save mankind”.

Extra

What is the World Water Council?

For this journalist, before the meeting, the World Water Council was “just another international organisation”. The council’s president defines its purpose as *“to raise awareness, but also to provide solutions in all fields relating to water. Water is a factor everywhere. It’s a factor in climate change, in demographics, in town planning. You can’t develop a city without water, but, at the same time, cities poison water supplies. Water is also directly linked to energy: between now and 2035, energy use is set to increase by 35% worldwide, with water consumption increasing by 85% as a result, meaning there is a need to develop a global, interdisciplinary strategy. Without water, you can’t grow crops. If there is too much water, that leads to flooding, bringing with it all sorts of health issues, including typhoid or malaria carried by mosquitoes: illnesses such as these remain the n°1 cause of death worldwide. We know how to desalinate, reuse, tap and transport water. There are a whole range of possible solutions. The role of the council is to attract the attention of politicians and to raise awareness among stakeholders in the business world with regard to the necessary solutions. Every three years we organise a world forum, which is one of the largest global events centred around one theme – we had 10,000 participants in Brasilia last year. The next event, the 9th, is set to be held in 2021 in Dakar”*. This journalist is convinced!

Additional data

Marseille has the benefit of two resources in the form of the Marseille Canal, which transports water from the Durance, and the Provence Canal, which transports water from the Verdon. The distribution network is comprised of 5,500 km of pipes, with a loss rate of just 14% as a result of leaks. The goal for the next 5 years is to bring this down to 10%. 32 km of the network is renewed each year (twice the national rate). Acoustic sensors have been installed, capable of detecting 1,000 leaks a year. This concept of productivity is essential, given that in some cities in the world, this figure sits at 50%. The USA is one of the most wasteful countries in the world in this regard.
Source: Régis Masse, engineer and director of operations at the SEM, which supplies the 2 million people that live in the metropolitan area.

Station: Europe 1

Theme: World Water Day

Journalist: Matthieu Belliard

Broadcast on: 22/3/19 – Journal de 18h (6 o'clock news)

<https://www.europe1.fr/emissions/votre-grand-journal-du-soir-avec-matthieu-belliard/matthieu-belliard-220319-3878840>



Interview of Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council
Radio transcript

Mathieu Belliard: Good evening Loïc Fauchon.

Loïc Fauchon: Good evening.

Matthieu Belliard: We need to explain to our listeners what World Water Day is. Water is a major issue, but I'm not really sure that we know enough about it. 40% of people worldwide currently suffer from water shortages or experience water shortages. The theme for this World Water Day is "Leaving no-one behind", with the goal being to ensure everyone has access to water by 2030. Do you feel that is feasible, Loïc Fauchon?

Loïc Fauchon: The question is not whether or not this is currently feasible, but rather, to pick up on what you said, to ensure water isn't left behind. Of course it's essential that we don't leave people behind, but without water life is impossible. We can't produce food, we can't care for each other. To a certain extent, what we want is to stop abusing water, because it's fair to say that water is abused. We talk a lot about climate change, but climate change is the impending tragedy. Today, however, given population growth, we're going to need a lot more water. Living standards are rising. When we manufacture a car, we use water; when we make clothes, we use water, and so on. Then there is the issue of urbanisation, which also raises consumption levels, and this terrifying pollution, which we get the impression we are just discovering, when in reality the warning signs have been there for a long time. Then there is the issue of plastics, which will cause problems for the regeneration of water in the water cycle.

Matthieu Belliard: Loïc Fauchon, I'm delighted to have you here live with us this evening, because this is a subject I really wanted to address. Do we have a problem in the west, given that we're so used to being able to choose between hot water, cold water and tepid water? It's so easy for us to access water. Is there a lack of awareness? Do we really appreciate how precious water is, Loïc Fauchon?

Loïc Fauchon: No, we absolutely don't. This isn't about pointing fingers at individuals, it's something we've all been guilty of. There's no doubt that, a hundred years ago for some, 70 years ago for others, there was a feeling, in what you might call the Western world, that we had solved the water problem, that it was behind us and that we would never hear about it again. But now it's back. Just look at California, with its wealth and its place in the USA, they've had a water crisis for 4 years now. The dams there are only half full, and not because there is a lack of water, but because the dams can't be filled for fear that they will burst or break because too much has been done in the gulfs, in agriculture. And in France, even, since this will be going out to a mainly French audience, there are parts of our country where there is no water in summer. In the third week of August last year, 70 French *départements* out of 101 were subject to prefectural restrictions. What does that mean? It

means people can't water their gardens, wash their cars or fill up their swimming pools, and yet it was raining. If we take the Midi Pyrénées region, for example, the Garonne basin, it rains in the south-west, but we've forgotten how to store water in the winter for use in the summer. This will be a problem for France in the years to come, and this is why I say, even if I know that it is bound to create controversy, that we need to build new dams, new reservoir dams, new dams that will help us to produce electricity. If we fail to do that, parts of France will experience droughts within the next 10 years.

Matthieu Belliard: One last thing, Loïc Fauchon. To be honest with you, this isn't a subject I knew much about, but in preparing for our interview, I found out so many things, including about your organisation, the World Water Council. I found out that there are a whole host of associations, organisations and public bodies who are active in this particular area. It may not have worked for climate change, but we were able to raise awareness – might it be necessary to form a similar major organisation or to work together in order to make more people aware of this issue worldwide?

Loïc Fauchon: People can think what they like about the UN agencies you refer to, it's not my place to make judgements. The World Water Council, of which I am the president, brings together 400 organisations from 70 different countries. All of the organisations you spoke about are members of our council and the goal of the council is to coordinate them, while simultaneously raising awareness levels, but for me this isn't enough. It's up to us to come up with solutions, and, given the tensions surrounding the issue of water, we need to initiate a process of mediation, as we were able to do between Turkey, Syria and Iraq and as we are currently doing between Ethiopia and Egypt in relation to the Nile. Should the UN decide at some point in the future to create a water organisation, then of course we'll be happy to work with such an organisation. The only thing that matters is to promote the cause of water.

Matthieu Belliard: Thank you, Loïc Fauchon. Hopefully our fellow citizens will be more aware of the issue now. There is a massive problem with water, we currently have a massive problem. Loïc Fauchon reminded us of the water shortages that we have already seen in our country during the summer. There will also be massive geopolitical problems in the future – wars could start over the issue of water shortages in certain countries. We need to pay close attention to this issue and to the 2 billion people currently living without drinking water.
Thank you, Loïc Fauchon.