



Opening session of XXIV Simposio Brasileiro de Recursos  
Hidricos  
Belo Horizonte, Opening Ceremony  
21 Novembre 2021

Mr. President,  
Dear friends of Water,

I had initially planned to be with you in Belo Horizonte, in beautiful Minas Gerais “the State of Water”, to come back and greet my Brazilian friends who did such a great job for the 8<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum. But circumstances did not allow me to travel.

I am very happy to participate by video message in the opening ceremony of the 24th Simposio Brasileiro on Water Resources. And to have the opportunity to address the Brazilian water community, many of you being valuable members of the World Water Council.

I also thank you for hosting in the Symposium some dedicated sessions to the presentation of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum which will be held next March in Dakar, Senegal. The three sessions that you are organizing give a wide overview on some of the most challenging thematic subjects that will be discussed : Challenges for financing of the SDG6 in Latin America, Conflicts around Water in the World : mechanisms and strategy for shared management of water resources and Monitoring of waste waters for sanitary watching : experience and lessons learnt in Covid 19 world.

More generally, I would like to deliver you a short message about the global challenges of water :

Water is important because with water comes life, food, education, and peace, but when it is scarce, not only its absence



generates tensions and crisis between communities and countries, but it also threatens the environment, and global ecosystems.

Indeed, the excessive urbanization not only reduces the quantity of non-renewable resources, but also generates pollution and waste that modify, alter, or destroy the functionality of ecosystems, both on a local and global scale.

Because Man's impact on Nature is too strong, we must learn to respond to the requirements of human development and at the same time to the respect of nature, by maintaining biodiversity and protecting ecosystems. It is urgent for nature conservancy that we learn to consume better.

However, water is still struggling to become one of the most urgent political priorities while it is an essential component of geopolitics. Because we should all act as citizens of the world, the World Water Council works on three pillars: shared knowledge, adapted financing and accepted governance, to guarantee water security for us all and by us all.

The first pillar, knowledge, could be defined as enhancing research to find new ways of managing water that are both economic and ecological. The more we innovate in research, the more we can bring renewable resources and nature-based solutions for water management, thus benefiting water security. For example, due to research progress, desalination of sea water using reverse osmosis is now implemented in more than 70 countries around the world at an acceptable cost.

The second pillar, finance, enables the realization of the development possibilities brought by knowledge. The situation can be summed up as "water is short of money, but money is short of water".

One of the fundamental issues is the generalization of sub-sovereignty which allows, for example, a city in a poor country to



borrow without a state guarantee while demonstrating its ability to repay.

All in all, that means that the era of water centralism is over and that we must ensure fair distribution and complete openness.

That is why the third and last pillar is governance. Water governance must be efficiently shared by the State, which ensures the resource's availability and regulates its proper use, with the assistance of the private sector. Then there is also the role of river basins authorities, which coordinate resource distribution and use, while ensuring quality through public policy. Basin management has helped countries like Mexico, Senegal, your country Brazil, and many others improve their water security. Finally, there is the level of local governments and residents who are responsible for treatment, distribution, and cost collection.

Therefore, if the citizen, who is also a consumer, gets involved in this 3-level governance, the pillars are proving their efficiency.

I would also like to underline the importance of rural areas. For years, we've only talked about "smart cities" when it comes to innovation, but never about "smart rural areas."

However, it is people from the rural areas and not city inhabitants that guarantee water and food protection and production and are responsible for the preservation of forests and rural areas.

To fulfill these commitments, we must all work with a horizontal and fundamental approach. Local authorities understand things better than the central government; therefore, mayors, local communities and local groups must be given more responsibilities. This horizontal and basic approach is required. In the future years, it will most likely become mainstream in the field of 'water-thinking.'



Allow me to conclude by mentioning the right to water. It is a complicated right that is simple to declare but difficult to enforce in practice. For more than two decades, we have demanded that every human being have access to sufficient, high-quality water at a cost that is affordable to the poorest.

Some of the numerous possible solutions include the inclusion of the right to water in constitutions, the availability of free minimum allowances, or social tariffs. The solutions are political, and we must insist that they be provided.

"Water is politics," and the only way to stop water misery is for everyone to commit. This is the World Water Council's mission, but it is also ours as individuals. Dear friends of water, if you should remember only one thing from this presentation it could be:

Water is a political issue to which every citizen has the duty to contribute.

This my short message for today.

I wish a great success to the Symposium and invite all of you to participate in the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Dakar next March.