

*World Water Forum / Water Think Tank Side Event - Gyeongju, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015*  
*Proposed address of H.S.H. the Prince*

(Distinguished) Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

"The true eye of the earth is water" wrote the philosopher Gaston Bachelard. In my view, this phrase, which was written more than seventy years ago, has never been more relevant.

Water is indeed the essential and universal prism whereby the Earth scrutinises, judges and calls for our actions.

In these times of ecological crisis, water meets the immediate demands of all living human beings - thirst, hunger, hygiene and development. It concerns our present.

And at the same time, it is pointing out the dangers that lie ahead, calling for sustainable solutions for those who will live here tomorrow - for our children. It concerns our future.

That is why I am particularly pleased to see you here again today, at this World Water Forum on the occasion of a new edition of the Water Think Tank which I launched six years ago now and which has proved its value and relevance over the years.

Its value is our realisation of an ever-increasing challenge which concerns the entire Planet and the Mediterranean region in particular. At a time when environmental threats are so serious, water clearly appears as the central component around which all the challenges we need to address combine. Water represents, more than any other issue, the global responsibility that should drive us, englobing climate change and biodiversity, as well as economic development, health and nutrition.

Its relevance is the uniting of personalities and institutions involved daily in water resources management, offering solutions and eager to make progress through dialogue and reflection. Experts, decision-makers, operators - it is by joining forces that we will be able to find a resolution to the issues of today's world; it is by joining forces that we will be able to identify and implement the solutions required.

That is why I would like to thank you for your presence and your commitment.

And above all that is why I would like to give special thanks to all our partners who, alongside my Foundation, have promoted the Water Think Tank since 2009. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Blue Plan, the International Office for Water and the Veolia Environnement Foundation have played a key role in advancing our discussions and organising our

work. I am delighted to extend a very warm welcome to their representatives and to express my gratitude to them.

For the past six years, thanks to them and with them, we have advanced our discussions and action, including the publication of two manuals devoted to water governance.

The first focused on conflicts of use, the second on water regulation on a metropolitan scale. They both were based on the same principle which since 2009 has guided our work: that is to focus on operational, concrete and specific aspects in order to identify solutions that can be adapted at a broader level.

The third manual, which we are delighted to present to you today, is in line with these objectives. The result of research and analytical work, dialogue and appraisal, it provides a comprehensive and concise overview of the issues at stake in water demand management in the Mediterranean and solutions that are currently available.

I won't go into the details here of this work which I strongly encourage you to consult directly. However I would nonetheless like to focus on two points that I feel are essential.

The first of course is the chosen perspective: demand. Too often, the question of demand is dealt with from a point of view which I believe is extremely irenic, if not dangerous. Responsibility is passed onto individuals, we call for the sobriety of our contemporaries, we deplore their voracity, we strive for an impossible negative growth...

However those who are aware of the reality on the ground know that for the daily lives of the millions of men and women we are talking about, this negative growth is not only impossible but also undesirable. When feeding, washing and taking care of oneself is an issue, how can we dare speak of negative growth? Let us not forget that 180 million Mediterraneans live below the water poverty threshold: 1000 m<sup>3</sup> per year and per capita...

For them, for our children, for all of us, what we need is to create a moderate, responsible, and sustainable growth for water as for all other natural resources. And in order to do this, we need to begin with a rational and objective approach in relation to demand.

Such an approach is possible - we have proof of this here. It is based on serious scientific research, technical solutions which have proved their worth, sound economic studies and extremely concrete political prospects.

Whether it involves technical tools focused, for example, on greater efficiency of water supply and irrigation procedures, or the reduced vulnerability of agronomic models; whether it involves economic tools with the implementation of quotas or investment grants; or whether it is a question

of regulatory tools with the implementation of monitoring instruments and planning methods, a wide range of solutions is available today.

It is our responsibility to pursue them and to do whatever it takes to make our leaders pursue them.

This is one of the qualities of the work we are presenting now: to point out this reality and propose concrete solutions which it is our responsibility to decide upon, in terms of measuring, sharing and preserving our water resources.

Which brings me to the second aspect I would like to emphasise: the highly operational dimension of our work. The presence here today of high-ranking politicians from various countries but also from major multilateral institutions, proves that we are united in our resolve for action.

The MoUs that we are about to sign with the Moroccan Ministry of Water and the Korean Water Forum are there to remind us how this intent for action and efficiency is shared, both in the Mediterranean and beyond.

We are at a rare point in history where consciousness is sensitive, where the tools are available and where action is possible. In terms of water management in particular, we have not yet reached the point beyond recovery, as is the case in other areas of environmental protection...

Everything depends on us still, everything depends only on us: we need to seize this unique opportunity!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

"The true eye of the earth is water". Gaston Bachelard's words, which I recalled earlier on, tell us nothing other than this urgent need to act, for us, for our children.

In these times where everything is permitted, where everything allows us to act, the eye of the earth, the eye of our ecological awareness, is watching us more than ever before.

Through these water-related issues, this universal awareness generated by the environmental crisis is urging us to assume our responsibility and to do whatever is in our power to protect what is a wonderful and vital resource: water.

I am delighted that our meeting today is making a contribution and am counting on you for this huge challenge.

Thank you.