



Speech by Loic Fauchon, President of the World Water Council

REUSE EUROMED Conference

From 29 to 31 October 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your kind invitation, although I regret not being able to join you today.

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the organizers of this conference for the wise selection of the topics for these sessions.

Dear colleagues, at the World Water Council, we often say, "water is under attack." Yes, water is under attack, and it is our collective responsibility to defend it against the threats it faces.

These threats are familiar to you: the climate, of course, with its unpredictable fluctuations, but also, and too often overlooked, uncontrolled population growth in certain parts of the world. These threats are exacerbated by unchecked urbanization, concentration around seas and rivers, increasing tourism pressures, and the growing mega-pollution around cities and their industrial and agricultural activities.

As I mentioned, defending water means protecting and valuing it before even allocating it among all its uses.

Allocating water means ensuring both its availability in quantity and quality. It involves finding the right balance between supply and demand in every region of the world and within every human community. This often comes down to producing more water resources while consuming less.

This intelligence is also called upon, thanks to all of you, and the genius of scientists and engineers, to imagine large-scale transfers from wetter regions to drier ones, to better use groundwater resources and make the invisible visible, to desalinate seawater and brackish water at a lower cost.

However, this alone is not enough. This is where the immense potential of all forms of water reuse comes into play.

At the World Water Council, it is custom to say that recycling and reusing wastewater represent the water revolution of this century.

Nearly half of the world's countries have already begun experimenting with reuse or are on the brink of doing so. Gradually, this REUSE practice will become the norm, primarily because the treatment of wastewater is expected to increase. With this adequately treated water, all forms of recycling become feasible, increasingly cost-effective, and more efficient.

Treatment methods are advancing rapidly, with innovations such as filtration membranes, nanofiltration, disinfection via radiation or activated charcoal, and biological treatments using biofilms and activated sludge. The array of solutions expands each year, now including graphene and biomimetic membranes. Furthermore, the integration of renewable energy sources—such as solar, wind, and geothermal—enhances the viability of reuse as a sustainable solution for the future. Combine this with the use of renewable energies - solar, wind, geothermal and others - and reuse has a long, bright future ahead of it.

In this context, the World Water Council established an observatory over four years ago, which has since evolved into a Center for Non-Conventional Water Resources paired with renewable energy. Reuse and recycling are central to our collaborative efforts with the Mediterranean Water Institute.

Of course, in many countries, we still need to implement vital legislative, regulatory, and administrative changes, as well as enhance public awareness and education, particularly targeting decision-makers, the general public, and younger generations.

Yes, dear friends, it is thanks to all of you that we have solutions through both local and international initiatives that are addressing—and will continue to address—the water crisis. Together, we are shaping a future where every drop of water counts. In doing so, wastewater transforms into a critical resource that will contribute to the prosperity of tomorrow's world.

Thank you for pioneering this revolution, and I wish you every success in your work.