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Thank you, Mr Chairman. Don't even ask me why I'm discussing water issues after handling global liquidity for the IMF for 13 years. It's probably a casting mistake, but in any case, I'm not going to talk about it because I wouldn't be able to fit it into the time slot you've allotted me. Three words will suffice: "Water is life". This is a universally held belief and it is essential to ensure that each human being has access to water. Water, which is the Millennium Development Goal that drives all of the others – education, health, growth of developing countries, etc. – was an orphan in the United Nations system until very recently.

Louise just stated it admirably: there are 27 organisations in the United Nations constellation that have responsibility for water. You see how that can generate all kinds of duplications and disorganisation. We thought we had solved the problem a few years ago by deciding that each organisation would alternate taking the helm for one year. That didn't work very well, but the problem peaked when the Iraq war broke out under the pretext that Saddam Hussein had nuclear ambitions. At that time, it was the nuclear agency led by Mr El-Baradei that was in charge of water. You can well imagine that he didn't pay much attention to water that year. So we had to try something else. What did we do? What remains to be done and how should we do it?

Problems in water governance exist at every link in the supply chain worldwide. We just spoke about global problems, but you will also find them at the regional level, where the issue is rarely addressed. This is especially true of trans-boundary water basins, even down to the village level, wherever that may be.

Various conferences were held to address these problems, culminating in Kyoto in 2003. At its Evian conference, the G8 had the fine idea of using the Kyoto conclusions to offer the rest of the world a global water action plan, which was put into effect somehow or other. And the United Nations created a group of advisors to the Secretary-General that serves, at the very least, as a "backseat driver" and plays a useful role in that sense.

We have made great progress in raising the awareness of international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank and Regional Development Bank. Here I would like to especially recognise the efforts of the African Development Bank under the leadership of a great Moroccan figure, Omar Kabbaj. Mr Kabbaj created a water facility, mainly with loans and donations, that operates by reversing the usual water funding chain. This chain is usually centralised in the national Treasury and, after the State level, finances water systems in major cities but does very little for villages. With this facility, the opposite is true: programmes are funded on the basis of village demand, mainly originating from women's organisations, and 32 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Sahel region, have already gained access to water and sanitation



systems. I'm pointing this out because replenishing this facility will be on our governments' agenda in 2010 so it is essential that it continue to receive an adequate level of funding.

These efforts have led to considerable progress and it is interesting to note that the Millennium Goal results of one-third of African countries outperform the world average – proof that Africa has not missed this train, although we still have far to go.

What remains to be done? An enormous amount, of course. Too many children are dying of waterborne diseases, especially diarrhoea; too many girls stop going to school once they reach the age of 9 or 10 because there is no privacy in the toilets; and too many girls and young women lose many hours of their day going to fetch water far from their villages. These facts all suggest that the water problem is primarily an injustice to women, and that is the reason it is a silent injustice that is particularly hard to resolve.

So we have an enormous task ahead of us, especially when we know that, in Africa, we will not even come close to achieving the Millennium Goal of reducing by half the proportion of the global population without access to water or sanitation (1.2 billion people without access; 2.6 billion without sanitation). That is another reason to multiply our efforts, especially because since the goals were set, we have learned from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that the problems have been getting worse, that world demand for water has been growing at a fast pace and that in 2050, 50% or probably more of the world population will be facing water stress. This shows you to what extent a real effort is essential worldwide to invest in water and sanitation infrastructure.

How should we go about this? I have a few major points I would like to make: firstly, we must encourage cooperation among all players. Until now, we have acted in a completely disorganised way. If we do not manage to significantly improve cooperation between the private and public sectors, with non-governmental organisations, and cooperation at local, regional and national levels, we will never achieve our objectives.

Secondly, we must remember – and you suggested it with your questions, Mr Chairman – that the current level for water projects is the local community. True, water is local, almost by nature, because it is expensive to transport and has a high leakage rate. The strategic level is therefore the nation; it's a determination to move towards the national level that makes the difference. And that's why Morocco has performed remarkably well in this area, thanks to the strong determination of the late King Hassan II.

In addition, we must fight certain myths and prejudices, move towards integrated water management and change the way we view problems related to agriculture, food security and our adaptation to climate change. And we must develop regional cooperation, especially at the trans-boundary level.

What are these myths and prejudices that are so hard to overcome? I'm mainly talking about the old myth that claims water should be free because it is given to us by the sky. Unfortunately, while the sky does indeed give us water, it does not purify it when it gets dirty or gives us pipes to distribute it. If we really want to solve all aspects of the water problem, it is obvious that consumers

must pay some of the cost and not leave the entire bill to taxpayers, whom we know will be subject to increased pressure in coming years in both the developing and advanced countries.

Particularly in emerging and developing countries, it would therefore be best to adopt pricing policies worldwide that cover not only social programmes, but also cost and maintenance reimbursements as well. This is absolutely essential. In areas without adequate pricing policies, the decision is made not to provide water to the poorest segments of the population.

Concerning the water pricing issue, there is a very critical aspect related to what we just learned and will be discussing in a minute, namely the pricing of water used in farming. Agriculture uses some 70% of available water, but it doesn't even come close to paying the actual cost. This leads to enormous distortion in water economics. While it is clear that we cannot immediately change this situation, it will have to be changed at some point by accepting higher prices for farm products.

Let me conclude by saying that the importance of trans-boundary water basins is a well-kept secret. I'm not asking you to answer the following question because I don't think anyone will know: guess the percentage of the world population that lives in trans-boundary basins? It's 40% and the figure is even higher in Africa. But basin and regional cooperation has nowhere close to the intensity and minimal organisation it needs. If there were one priority, I would say that is it. I will spare you my conclusions and open the floor to discussion.