

Kick-off meeting of the Local and regional authorities process  
Lyon 30 and 31 May 2011-05-30

**Opening speech of Martin GUESPEREAU**

Mr. Minister,  
Ladies and Gentlemen the Elected Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy, in my turn, to be able to welcome you to LYON in the name of the Rhone Mediterranean and Corsica Water Agency.

Let me firstly say “hello and thank you” for their participation, to the members of the Rhone-Mediterranean and Corsica Basin Committees present, our foreign partners with whom we have developed relationships of cooperation for a number of years and all the representatives of the Local authorities of the Rhone-Mediterranean and Corsica Basins.

The World Water Forum is a unique place for exchanges.

Our ambition is to make the Marseille World water Forum the Forum of concrete solutions. The solutions cannot be implemented without the involvement as a priority of the local authorities. This is what we in the Water Agencies have always defended since their foundation in the 1960s.

Firstly, the conformity of our 6 year programs of action are agreed by the basin committees, where the local authorities dominate. They are drawn up by defining the goals and the results to be reached, associated with indicators, to fight against pollution, preserve and manage water resources, develop knowledge and favor the concerted management of the aquatic environment.

Secondly, two thirds of our financing goes to the local authorities to be invested in water and sanitation infrastructure.

Finally, we are deeply involved in the development of concerted management and for the local authorities to take responsibility for river management structures.

The European water framework directive, adopted by the European Union in September 2000, reinforces this evolution. It has introduced a culture of results where the policy of means dominates. The Istanbul Consensus wind of change blows on.

Thus, the directive has fixed concrete objectives, such as attaining the good state of water in 2015 (in France, 66% of the surface water masses should be in a good ecological state by 2015). It is also attacking the reduction or the elimination of toxic substances.

At the end of this conference here in Lyon, we shall continue our efforts to promote the Istanbul Consensus among the local authorities to reach the goal of 1,000 signatories to the Consensus in Marseille in March 2012.

Within the Rhone Mediterranean basin, we have two champion cities: Lyon for the water and health theme and Marseille for the theme of water and its risks. We shall make these two examples known so as to encourage further commitments.

In partnership with certain local authorities, we are preparing a number of events which are to take place during the Forum in March 2012. For example, with the Hérault Department, we are preparing a series of conference-debates and a visit to the étang de Thau (near Montpellier). The conferences will provide an opportunity to present concrete solutions for a better sharing of the resources between the different uses and the way in which integrated management is implemented.

This June, we shall be kicking off the preparation of the visits around Marseille during the Forum. On each occasion these visits will illustrate concrete solutions.

All the Water Agencies are preparing events in each basin. They will take place in Metz, Paris, Orléans, Douai, Toulouse...

Finally to terminate my speech, I would like to draw attention to decentralized cooperation in the water domain in which the Water Agencies are among the main players in France. The law of 9th February 2005 commonly called the law OUDIN/SANTINI – I give my regards to Senator OUDIN who is in our midst - has laid the legal framework which we needed. This law requires of local authorities and their groupings to devote 1% of the budget of their drinking water distribution and sanitation department to aid to finance actions of cooperation with local authorities in foreign countries.

The Water Agencies also have the goal of devoting 1% of the amount of the fees they receive to decentralized cooperation. They handed over 27.5 M€ of aid between 2007 and 2010 in support of 530 operations representing works to the value of 113 M€.

The RM and C Agency reached the level of 1 % of its income for the first time in 2010. From 2007 to 2010, it supported 80 sanitation and drinking water projects in the amount of 3.6M€ of aid corresponding to works to the value of 13 M€. It intervenes, in partnership with local authorities of our basins, in projects of solidarity in the fight against pollution and the preservation of water resources, in countries around the Mediterranean (Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine...) or French-speaking Africa (Mali, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, Togo,...) and since 2010 in Haiti.

As a complement, the RM&C Water Agency also intervenes in institutional collaboration with the organizations from foreign basins. Our highly researched knowledge concerns the planning and information on water resources, the implementation of the principle "it's the polluter who pays"... They complete the actions concerning the water and sanitation departments of the local authorities with environmental action on the water resource. When these high level professional relationships take place on the same territories as the solidarity projects, the two sides of the international cooperation of the Agency join up and are mutually reinforced. This is the case for example in Morocco and in Madagascar.

We always insist that the projects are backed by measures of information to raise awareness among the populations, to train technicians and evaluate projects.

Welcome, once again to this marvelous River Rhone basin. The world water community is waiting for your solutions.