



Royaume du Maroc
Ministère de
l'Équipement et de l'Eau



**KEYNOTE SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLECY
MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT AND WATER
AND PRESIDENT OF THE INBO**

**HIGH LEVEL SIDE- EVENT :
"SUSTAINABILITY IN THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF
GROUNDWATER RESSOURCES"**

MOROCCO - INBO - UNESCO

ECOSOC Room

March 22nd, 2023

12h30 - 13h45

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ministers,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first, as Minister of Equipment and Water of Morocco and also as President of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), to welcome you all to this Side-Event and express my gratitude for having responded to our invitation and for having chosen to take part in this high-level meeting which will discuss an extremely important issue "sustainability in the good governance of groundwater resources".

My thanks also go to the governments and to the institutions and organizations that have expressed their interest in being partners in this event and in participating in it. I would also like to salute the successful collaboration established between Morocco, INBO and UNESCO for the planning and organization of the session that will take place today.

Today, this event, which is part of the United Nations Water Conference, is a second opportunity, after the Groundwater Summit held at UNESCO-Paris in December 2022, to highlight the challenges and solutions related to groundwater governance at the international level in order to ensure its preservation and sustainable use, on the one hand, and to discuss how sustainability could be taken into account, particularly at basin level, in order to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Morocco, water governance is concerned by several stakeholders, namely the consultative bodies (The Supreme Council for Water and Climate (CSEC), the National Council for the Environment (CNE), the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), and Higher Council for Spatial Planning (CSAT), the Interministerial Water Commission (CIE), and the main ministerial departments in charge of Water, Agriculture, Environment, Interior, Water and Forests, Economy and Finance. Some Public establishments are also concerned by this governance, namely the Hydraulic Basin Agencies (ABH), the National Office of Electricity and Drinking Water (ONEE) and Regional agricultural development offices (ORMVA).

Regarding groundwater resources, Morocco has about 98 superficial aquifers and 32 deep aquifers. Renewable groundwater resources are estimated at about 4 billion cubic meters, or about 20% of the national water potential according to the current level of knowledge. These resources constitute strategic resources, especially during periods of drought or low water levels.

However, the growing demand for water, as well as the succession of years of drought, that Morocco has experienced, especially in the last five years, considered to be the worst drought it has experienced in more than three decades, have led overexploitation of aquifers to meet water needs, particularly for irrigation. Withdrawals from groundwater have greatly exceeded the volume of water that is renewable annually and 90% of the underground water points identified are not authorized.

This situation has led to groundwater decline. In some cases, this overexploitation has also led to the reduction of the flow of springs, the drying up of certain springs and natural lakes, as well as the deterioration of the groundwater quality such as in the case of coastal aquifers.

Groundwater governance has become a high priority at the national level, underlined by HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI, may God assist him, in his last Royal speech, in particular that of October 14, 2022, on the occasion of the opening of the first session of the second legislative year of the 11th legislature, by giving its royal orientation in this aspect. I bring you an extract ***“we have to pay special attention to the rational use of groundwater and preserve the water table by tackling illegal pumping and the erratic drilling of wells”***.

Thus, Morocco has implemented a number of actions to limit the overexploitation of groundwater, which are: the establishment of participatory groundwater management contracts in common agreement with all partners and water users, control and monitoring measures for withdrawals, a ban on digging new water points in some cases and stopping the extension of new irrigated perimeters, as well as replenishing groundwater stocks through an artificial recharge program.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Integrated Water Resources Management at the basin scale is today and more than ever a creative way to jointly and sustainably manage groundwater and surface water. This approach has been proven internationally to be effective and has tangible global benefits.

Cooperation and solidarity at national and international level should be further expanded, especially for groundwater, around practical tools such as cooperative information systems, long-term planning and communication between all users of the groundwater, in particular for energy, food and the preservation of ecosystems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that the role of basin organizations will become more important in the implementation of IWRM in the future, particularly in difficult water circumstances and especially when it comes to transboundary groundwater. Therefore, a particular importance should be given to the Dakar Action Plan for the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers, launched in Dakar at the last World Water Forum, within the framework of the segment of basins organized for the first time, and which INBO actively promoted, alongside OMVG, OMVS, UNECE and Switzerland, and which today constitutes the heart of our action in this United Nations conference on water.

Beyond the single challenge of achieving Sustainable Development Goal No. 6 on water and sanitation, the Dakar action plan on basins affirms that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to water depends heavily on our ability to act on the basin scale, to implement Integrated Water Resources Management and to improve intersectoral cooperation as well as cooperation between administrations at local level.

This is obviously true for the achievement of universal and equitable access to clean and affordable drinking water for all, since all our drinking water sources draw from lakes, rivers and of course aquifers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by inviting you to the third international conference on water and climate, which will be held on July 6 and 7, 2023, in Fez, Morocco, and which will be organized jointly by my Ministry, the International Network of Organizations of Basins (INBO) and the World Water Council (WWC).

The theme chosen for this conference will be “Basin management, the key to adaptation and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”. Indeed, this conference will ensure the link between the current United Nations Water Conference and the COP28 to be held this year in the United Arab Emirates.

State representatives, United Nations agencies, international organizations, bilateral and multilateral donors, basin organizations (national and transboundary), regional and local authorities, universities and other actors interested in the management of water at basin level are invited to attend this international event and share their experiences in groundwater management, innovation and technologies for water saving, water resources mobilization and water governance, for better coherence between national and international basin management efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that our discussion today will be fruitful and allow us to come out with concrete solutions, actions and commitments to integrate into the 2030 Water Agenda.

Thank you for your attention.