WE MUST UNLEASH THE DAMS

We are being told that climate variation will make for a thirsty planet. That is, if nothing is done. A few billion people are already suffering from acute thirst because of little or no access to water, because of agricultural, industrial or domestic pollution, or because of a lack of toilets, sewerage and treatment systems.

Although water and sanitation were millennium targets, they still are not a priority. Guns, canons and mobile phones still continue to come before drinking water.

Water is, however, everywhere on and beneath the surface of the earth, and available at a moment's notice, but not always in the long run. Today, many countries – including France– can no longer or not at all store water to deal with demographic growth and increasing standards of living, especially in cities.

Dams and freshwater reservoirs have a bad reputation. They are said to be detrimental to the conservation of biodiversity. As a result, seasonal water shortages are recurrent in France. Last August alone, water restrictions were placed on 70 of about 100 French departments.

The poorest countries are not the only ones affected. California is on the brink of disaster, like some of its aging and neglected dams, which is causing an unprecedented water crisis

Ever since ancient times, however, humanity has always been careful about keeping its winter waters for summer, its flowing rains for days of thirst.

Two things are needed: we need many more dams that are respectful of nature, that are more "intelligent", and that are shared equally among purposes. And we need a lot of them. We must also renew our networks everywhere, as well as our pipes that leak like old sieves and cause shameful loss and waste. Finally, we must convince the people and younger generations to be more moderate and respectful consumers.

Ours is a huge program, but of compelling necessity. Our political obligation is to secure water for today and for tomorrow.

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