

## Discours d'introduction - MUM – Valence – 28/04/2023

Dear board of the Model United Nations,

Dear Delegates representing all member states of the UN,

I am thrilled and grateful to join you today for the introduction of this general assembly of the UN. I am certain that all of you are going to produce a wonderful work that will make your teachers extremely proud.

Since your agenda addresses global issues on water, let's take the plunge and set to work!

*“Water is about health, sanitation, hygiene and disease-prevention. Water is about peace. Water is about sustainable development, fighting poverty, supporting food systems and creating jobs and prosperity. Water is about human rights and gender equality.”*

These words are not mine, I took them from Secretary-general of the UN, Mister Antonio Guterres's speech last month, during the 2023 Water Conference co-hosted by the Netherlands and Tajikistan.

Indeed, the stakes related to water are innumerable as this resource can take extremely diverse forms and uses, from ice to steam. At the same time medium and reason, water is used to move, to farm but also to make war, as much on water and through water by restricting the access to this resource for example.

While 1 in 2 people globally do not have access to safe drinking water, the supply in water reflects the global inequalities of development. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene still remains a global issue that needs to be fixed by the international community.

Through the committees you were assigned to, you will have to work on all these facets of water.

First, the disarmament committee. For thousands of years, humans have been moving on water all around the globe. Sometimes in a violent way, people have met each other and, over time, have learned to promote exchanges and trade which established peaceful relations. However, in our globalized world community, actors have become so interconnected that the sources of conflict, which already existed, now connect to other factors and increase the level of violence. Once again, seas are as much a factor of peace as a field of conflict. As you have certainly seen in East Asia in recent months for example, the sea is used as a field of war and tension. You will certainly work on the worrying case of Taiwan, that I had the opportunity to visit last month. China threatens Taiwan to block the Taiwan strait. Freedom of circulation inside this strait is of paramount importance for the

stability of Asia and of the world, as half of the worldwide freight goes through this narrow part of the sea.

We need to find consensus, between States, to prevent these conflicts, to put in place procedures to defuse crises and to ensure that violence is the least armed and the least destructible as possible when it breaks out. I trust you to make our seas safer.

Depriving civilians from access to safe water is forbidden by International Humanitarian Law, but is used as a weapon by Russians. This is why Ukraine's water infrastructures, from dam to water treatment and wastewater system, have been extensively targeted by Russia. I could witness it when I was in Kyiv on February 24, one year after the invasion.

As you know, climate change is affecting our societies more and more each year. And, somewhat cynically, global southern countries that have contributed the least to CO2 emissions and have the least capacity for resilience and adaptation will suffer the most from this disruption.

Among these countries, small independent islands are among the most fragile and we need to find mechanisms to protect these states from rising waters, which are often sanctuaries for biodiversity. As such, you may have heard about the resolution passed on March 29 at the United Nations General Assembly, which was proposed by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, an archipelago state in Melanesia in the Pacific. This small island state succeeded in having a mechanism adopted that obliges historically CO2 emitting states to protect smaller island states from the effects of climate change. The Prime Minister has received the support of 17 other countries from different regions in his fight and the General Assembly will request an opinion from the International Court of Justice on the subject to put in place concrete mechanisms of climate justice. May the Human Rights committee be inspired by this resolution as you must protect the rights of these states to exist and survive over their own lands.

Closely related, the issue of crimes affecting marine ecosystems is increasingly important to protect both our oceans, the livelihood of marine peoples but also the health of our economies and societies through drug trafficking and smuggling. On a global scale, we need better coordination between states, supranational and international actors. To do so, an ambitious legal framework must be found and it will be the role of the Committee on Drugs and Crime to ensure that our seas and oceans are safer for both the environment and humans. The historic agreement reached on March 4<sup>th</sup> on the protection of biodiversity on the high seas is a real revolution because it allows for the creation of marine protected areas on the high seas. It should be remembered that two thirds of the world's surface is ocean and that a large part of this maritime surface is not subject to the jurisdiction of a single State.

The stakes are huge. Your role will be to think more about the fight and the sanctions against these scourges.

The year 2022 was exceptionally warm and dry from a climatic point of view. France was not spared and even experienced its hottest year since the beginning of the 20th century. These temperatures were accompanied by a historic drought in Europe that endangered 63% of the rivers on the continent. Even in the winter of 2022-2023, there was not enough rainfall to recharge the groundwater tables sufficiently to face the coming summer. Water is thus suddenly becoming a health and strategic issue even in countries where, historically, there is no shortage of water.

This is why, last month, Emmanuel Macron presented the "water plan", which is supposed to improve our use of water and prepare the sobriety that will allow us to better react to these crises in the near future. If we speak in a global context, not all countries will have the geographical and economic resources to adapt to these changes. It is necessary for the UN Development Program to accompany the more fragile countries in order to renew their water practices and to increase their resilience but also to avoid water-related diseases, which are on the rise in central Africa due to the recent natural catastrophes.

May I suggest that women are particularly affected by shortage of water, as they spend hours (200 millions hours in total) and money to collect water for their families.

Last but not least, some of you will work on the great Pacific Garbage Patch. Every minute, more than 15 tons of waste are thrown into the ocean. Fighting against this scourge is an issue of environment protection, public health and economy since we will have to work with the major industries for them to develop materials that are less harmful to the oceans. Microplastics contaminate seafood, sea salt and other fish and, in addition to threatening human health by ending up on our plates, disrupt the growth of marine animals and destroy marine wildlife. It is therefore your duty to better regulate industrial groups and to better manage recycling channels, and by the way, to ban plastic bottles in any meetings, as water can be collected from the tap and poured in reusable bottles and glasses.

Fighting against conflicts and armed violence at sea and against crimes that affect the environment, working for a better consideration of island countries threatened by rising waters in international policies or for a better accompaniment of fragile peoples; your work is giant but I have confidence in you and in your will to make the world including the oceans a better place!

Access to water is a human right. Water is also an indispensable resource for the economy : food, energy, industry. Water stress is increasing, driven by overdemand, mismanagement and the impact of (1) climate change (2) biodiversity loss) and (3) pollution. Unless we act now, almost half of the world's population will suffer acute water stress by 2030.

But water represents also a wonderful opportunity of technological and scientific innovations, social progress, human exchanges, in other words of a better world.

This is why the governance of water is key, both at the national and international level. From this point of view, I see 2 major events in the first half-year of 2023. First, last month, the UN 2023 Water Conference was held in New York. There, my close friend Barbara Pompili, former environment minister of France and current MP represented the OECD countries shared her experience and called for the creation of a special envoy for water at the UN. It has been done.

And second, today in Valence at Institut Notre Dame, the Youth of my Constituency organizes IMUN. I have no doubt that your works will help to make stakes of water more visible and incite all actors to properly manage this precious resource.

Dear delegates, my introduction has come to its conclusion.

I would like to tell you these last words: my speech with a piece of advice; act as volunteers Commit to your fights, commit to our rivers and oceans and, I'm talking especially to the girls here in the room, don't be afraid to stand up for your beliefs!

Thank you.