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## For Jean Michel Cousteau “Access to water for all is within reach but we need a change of mentality”

**Environmental and health issues were addressed by attendees of the plenary session of the Forum dialogue on “Water for Life and Security”, amongst which Jean Michel Cousteau, Hideaki Oda, José Luis Jové and Daniel Zimmer were present.**

Jean Michel Cousteau explained how his father, the famous oceanographer Jacques Cousteau, understood the importance of water on feeling thirsty, an experience that has led him to assert, “Water is an element that ensures life”. The president of the Ocean Futures Society believes that “a solution to the world’s water access problems is in our hands but we need a cultural change that involves people’s mentalities”. Cousteau emphasized the need for water charters that guarantee the right to water while he added that “over three million people die every year due to lack of water or because they use water in bad sanitary conditions, since our survival instinct leads us to drinking it”.

As a solution to this, Jean Michel Cousteau believes that civil society must be prepared for dramatic changes in their habits, and that these should transcend economic and political factors. “Civil Society must act upon locally initiated responses provided with a global vision”. During his appearance, Cousteau presented a video on the disaster of the Prestige oil tanker spill, which aims at raising awareness on the importance of education and the media in the process of bringing about the changes desired.

José Luis Jové CEO of the Grup Agbar, explained that “the implication of the private sector in water management implies more success than failure, although the failures have been more apparent in the media.” Jové defended that this participation would improve the quality of water and its accessibility. Along these lines, Jové stated that in a period of four years in Santiago de Chile water treated by a water-treatment plant went from 2% to 73%, therefore becoming potable, with the consequent decrease of sanitary risks and an improvement of the conditions of the rivers. Economy and sustainability are inseparable.

Daniel Zimmer, executive director of the World Council on Water, explained that “the importance of the improvement in water accessibility given that in many underdeveloped countries, children cannot go to school because they dedicate too much time to transporting water.” For Zimmer, it is also important to understand water as “a sanitary instrument given that there are currently double the amount of people who don’t have access to sanitary facilities than people who do.” Zimmer proposed appropriate evacuation systems and networks of sanitation given that “there are no measures in this respect” he concluded.

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