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Stella Goldenstein, expert in environmental policy: "The diversion of waters tends to create problems in the long run"

The "141 questions" of the Forum (25): "How can we provide water to the 1 of 5 people who don't have access to it?" Stella Goldenstein, former Secretary of the Municipal Environment Secretariat, City of Sao Paulo (Brazil), pointed out that "what is important is to know how to correctly handle available water" given that water diversion creates problems, it "compromises ecosystems from where the water is taken and, on the other hand, encourages irresponsible use of water in the destination areas."

Three specialists participated today in the Forum's "141 questions" to state their points of view in respect to how we use water. Stella Goldenstein, former Secretary of the Municipal Environment Secretariat, City of Sao Paulo (Brazil), stressed that "there needs to be a change in mentality in how we manage water in our societies." Kusum Athukorale, director of the Network of Female Water Professionals (Sri Lanka), reflected on this "maybe there is enough water to satisfy our needs, but not our ambitions." Dame Sall, Secretary General of the African Center for Integrated Development (Senegal) stated that "water is a basic good, and its crisis cannot be solved regardless of poverty."

Stella Goldenstein said that different countries should adapt two basic principles to their cultures: prioritize the funding needed to combat thirst in the world and change the decision making procedures so that the global solutions that are planned are the result of social dialogue. She assured the public that the control of available water use is fundamental along with a non-obsessive approach to water diversion "given that this diversion compromises the ecosystems from where water is taken, and also encourages irresponsible use in the destination areas."

Kusum Athukorale stated that in the hotels in a city like Barcelona, for example, there is a very elevated use of water, "Here there isn't a culture of conservation." In her opinion, we could increase little by little the supply of water to more disadvantaged zones "this way we could try to satisfy our needs and not our ambitions." She added, "We have the obligation to attend to the serious water problems that affect the poorest countries."

Dame Sall stressed that in order to obtain a solution, first "we need to raise the awareness that there is not enough water in the world." He reminded the public that in recent years, that water consumption has increased by a multiple of six and that, if we continue like this, "soon there will be a significant crisis in the access of water." He also said that "the most valid approach is to consider water as a basic good" and that those who have more resources available should take an approach of solidarity with the regions most in need: "In Africa, 70% of the population lives in rural zones; the private sector is only interested in providing water to urban areas that count on a certain purchasing power," he concluded.

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