

Distinguished delegates, esteemed guests, and fellow youth advocates,

This is the future speaking. The year is 2050 and I am beyond proud to be here with all of you, looking back at the Water Conference in 2023. I am no longer 25, but 53 years old. In the past 27 years, I might have lost some of my youthfulness, but I have certainly gained some wisdom about societal transitions.

The past 27 years have been transformational, all thanks to that conference back in '23. It was the wake-up call the world needed to focus on water related issues and possibilities. Shortly after, countries started launching Water Action Plans. In these, they formulated concrete processes to bring the blue and green back into our cities, radically reduce water consumption by industrial and agricultural parties, give legal rights to water bodies and provide safe drinking water to all and more.

Governments were encouraged and supported in this move by the global youth movement. In the run up to the UN Water Conference, over one million youngsters came together to formulate their ideas on future water policies. The Dutch Youth Climate Movement spoke to youngsters from all over the country. The result was the Youth Water Vision: a youth vision document with hundreds of concrete ideas and policy proposals. The youth was unanimous in their appeal: there is no such thing as a fight against water. Humans are only fighting themselves by forcing the natural out of natural ecosystems. We have to embrace water.

And it wasn't just in the Netherlands that youth were constructively, yet ambitiously contributing to the national and international water agenda. Also in Chile, Bangladesh, Uganda, and many more countries, youth organizations like ours were sprouting up. Networks like the We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership amplified their united voice.

Looking back, the UNWC was the moment that water management changed globally to become more sustainable, equitable, and just than ever before. It succeeded only *because* delegates, representatives and companies decided to join forces with, rather than sideline, young generations. Because they knew, we knew, that they were the future.

Distinguished delegates, esteemed guests, and fellow youth advocates,

This is the future speaking. Don't forget to listen.