

## **Abdoulaye Sene, Chair of Regional Chairs, Stockholm, 19 May 2026**

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Dear Pablo, Global Chair of GWP, Dear Alex Executive Secretary,  
Dear colleagues, friends, members of the GWP family,

It is both an honour and a deeply emotional moment for me, to speak today on behalf of the thirteen Regional Water Partnerships — the living pillars that, for three decades, have carried GWP's vision across continents, river basins, institutions, and communities.

First, let me pay tribute to Sweden, to SIDA, and to Stockholm,

For thirty years, this city has been far more than the headquarters of an organisation. It has been the intellectual and moral home of a global movement — a place where science met policy, where North and South engaged as equal partners around a shared conviction : that water is a common good of humanity, and that its governance is a collective responsibility.

We honour the pioneers — Per, Johan, and all those who had the courage, in the 1990s, to build a global water partnership founded on principles rather than interests. Your vision has endured. And today, it matters more than ever.

I would also like to share a more personal reflection.

Although I had long known GWP by reputation, I truly discovered the depth of its importance, its dynamism, and its global impact while preparing the 9th World Water Forum held in Dakar in 2022.

During that process, I witnessed how GWP was able to connect institutions, regions, experts, political leaders, youth, and local actors around a common ambition. I saw a partnership capable not only of producing ideas, but of creating trust, facilitating dialogue, and generating concrete action across scales and continents.

That experience strengthened my conviction that GWP is not simply another international network. It is a unique platform for cooperation in a world increasingly marked by fragmentation.

From the regions, we have been both translators and amplifiers of that vision.

Across West Africa, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, GWP has helped make possible what once seemed unlikely : countries cooperating over shared waters, local communities participating in decisions that affect their future, and young professionals becoming leaders in water governance.

What Stockholm planted, the regions nurtured. What the regions nurtured, countries transformed into action. This constant connection between the global and the local is what makes GWP unique.

But today, the world is changing rapidly.

Climate disruption, food insecurity, geopolitical tensions, fragility of institutions — these crises are now interconnected. In the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East, water is no longer only a development issue. It is increasingly a matter of stability, peace, and human security.

In this context, an ordinary partnership is no longer enough.

We need a renewed GWP — more ambitious, more connected, and more influential. A partnership capable of acting coherently at all levels : locally, where communities face daily realities ; nationally, where policies are shaped ; regionally, where transboundary cooperation is essential ; and globally, where agendas and financing are decided.

This multi-level coherence is not simply an institutional model. It is our comparative advantage. It is what distinguishes GWP on the global water stage.

And we, the Regional Water Partnerships, are fully committed to strengthening that advantage.

We want our actions to be more impactful, more measurable, and more accountable. We want policy dialogue to lead to concrete results. We want every investment in GWP to translate into improved lives : safer water access, better managed basins, stronger resilience, and conflicts prevented.

Our compass remains clear : universal water security — everywhere and for everyone.

Not as a distant aspiration, but as an achievable objective, provided we act together with vision, solidarity, and political courage.

And this is why Windhoek represents far more than a relocation.

It represents renewal. It sends a powerful signal that GWP is capable of adapting, reinventing itself, and positioning itself closer to the realities and challenges of the future.

To Pablo, to Alex and the transition team : you can count on the support of the regions — our networks, our experience, and our commitment.

And to all of us gathered here today : let us make this moment not only a celebration of the past, but the starting point of a stronger, more united, and more determined GWP.

A GWP fully committed to making water security a universal reality.

Thank you.

Merci.

Tack