

Lettre ouverte

**Mr. Emmanuel Macron**  
**President of the Republic**  
Le Palais de l'Élysée  
55 rue du Faubourg Saint  
Honoré 75008 Paris

Angoulême, le 2 octobre 2023

**Subject: Water Crisis in Mayotte**

**Mr. President of the French Republic,**

We would like to draw your attention to the catastrophic situation of the residents in Mayotte who are facing a water shortage. Indeed, the water reserves (aquifer, two hillside reservoirs, a desalination plant, and several rivers) are nearly depleted, and the rainy season is not expected to start until November at the earliest.

The Prefecture of Mayotte has decided to cut off water two days out of three, and they are considering extending it to 96 consecutive hours of interruption. The situation is very alarming, as the department will only be able to produce 15,000 to 20,000 m<sup>3</sup> when the reservoirs are empty. The island's needs are estimated at 43,000 m<sup>3</sup>.

The Mahoran farmers are very concerned about their crops due to the lack of water. Most producers do not cultivate to sell but to feed themselves. Banana plantations have seen hardly any water for weeks. Everyone should start planting cassava, but no one dares to do so. MODEF Mayotte fears a poor mango harvest this year. Cassava and bananas grown in Mayotte constitute, after rice, the basis of the local diet. If they run out, MODEF Mayotte dreads a food crisis.

**MODEF calls for the activation of the agricultural disaster regime in this department and full coverage of losses through national solidarity to save Mayotte Agriculture.**

We are facing a serious humanitarian, health, economic, and soon-to-be food crisis. Cases of dehydration and diseases related to the lack of water and its quality are emerging. The hospital is under strain and fears an epidemic outbreak due to the shortage.

Basic needs (drinking water, sanitation, etc.) are not yet guaranteed for all Mahorans. One-third of Mahorans do not have running water. Water is absent in 29% of potable residences, double the rate compared to Guyana (14%).

Several factors exacerbate the water shortage on the island. Firstly, the distribution network is extremely fragile, with 40% of collected water being lost due to leaks. Moreover, the majority of the island's water bodies are in a "poor" or "mediocre" ecological state due to pollution from waste...

Today, the right to water is not guaranteed in our Republic. This is a scandal from a health, social, and human perspective, given the disastrous consequences on citizens. Schools are forced to close due to the non-potability of the distributed water.

Nothing has been done to prevent the catastrophe that the residents of Mayotte are currently experiencing. Indeed, the infrastructure for the production and supply of drinking water is insufficient, while the need for water is rapidly increasing with its rapidly growing population. Several elected officials have been convicted of corruption and illegal conflict of interest multiple times.

The solutions announced by your government, such as the distribution of bottled water, are not up to the challenge. MODEF demands the daily dispatch of ten containers of water from the mainland by the French army to meet the needs of students, hospitals, and 1,000-liter water storage tanks for farmers. We also request free vital cubic meters of water for the first 50 liters in Mayotte. Water packs are sold for 6 to 10 euros in Mayotte, compared to 2 to 3 euros in the mainland.

For long-term solutions, massive investment is needed to renew and improve the water distribution network to prevent leaks. An investment plan for pipelines, with a special focus on the Overseas Territories, is necessary to reduce water leak volume by half within 5 years.

Natural habitats must also be preserved. The lagoon suffers from waste and the discharge of inadequately treated wastewater into the coastal areas and rivers. Today, out of the 86,000 tons of household waste collected in 2021, only 400 tons were sorted. Improving waste collection is a necessary condition for Mayotte's economic development.

MODEF, like most citizens, is aware that water is a vital natural resource and, as such, cannot be treated as a commodity. It must be considered as the heritage of humanity. Therefore, water management must be public, democratic, and collective to preserve both its quantity and quality.

We want to ensure access to this resource for everyone.

The state must reinvest in water policy through a large-scale investment plan so that the right to water and sanitation, recognized as a fundamental human right by the United Nations in 2010, becomes effective.

Thank you for the attention you will undoubtedly give to our request, and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

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