

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

In my welcome speech yesterday evening, I expressed my great pleasure at being here with you, because I know that everyone here shares the same concerns and hopes.

We know that these concerns that drive us create a valuable solidarity between us. None of us claims to be able to act alone, and that's why we are here together.

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I will not dwell on the dangers that threaten the world's oceans that you already are aware of.

Climate change, ocean acidification, damage to biodiversity, endangered ecosystems, the weakening of the polar regions, overfishing, pollution, economic rivalry over new mineral or fishing resources, commercial issues related to new routes open in the polar regions... You know about it all, so I won't repeat it.

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Indeed, rather than draw up a report of the problems, this time for dialogue is intended to explore the solutions, in particular those offered by marine protected areas.

Upon initiating the debates, I would therefore like to recall some of the elements that I consider vital on the subject of these marine protected areas. In doing so, I would also like to open the discussion with the issues upon which I would like to gather your opinions, listen to your experiences and hear your proposals.

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I want to clarify that when we talk about protecting the seas, we are of course talking about natural heritage, the fauna and flora. But above all we are referring to men and women.

Humans who damage the ecosystems of course, but who can also protect them as long as we can convince them, especially that it's their own interest and who must always be central to our commitments.

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Indeed, I believe that the environmental struggle is a struggle for humanity. A struggle to ensure its future, by living responsibly in a protected and productive environment.

Therein lies one of the key points of the philosophy of marine protected areas, which cannot be seen as exclusion zones for man. They are, above all, zones of best harmony between man and the sea for the benefit of everyone.

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As tools for the sustainable management of marine resources in their diversity, marine protected areas give us the opportunity to put these resources to good use. They enable us to do so while observing the laws of nature and with the aim of improving lives.

I will cite at least three important aspects that I think call for the development of these areas.

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On the one hand, of course, there is an ecological interest, that of protecting a threatened natural heritage. But this ecological interest also concerns the restoration abilities of ecosystems often greatly damaged by decades of senseless human actions. Faced with this situation, the creation of protected zones will help marine areas to regenerate in an extremely interesting way. We will return to this shortly.

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I also want to highlight the effects of marine protected areas in terms of the fishing industry. We know that the creation of zones restricted or closed to fishing helps to increase not only the number of fish, but also their size and their reproductive abilities. Consequently, these areas have positive effects on all stocks from which fishing undeniably profits... provided that it respects the exclusion zones.

But it would be futile and without a doubt useless to consider the value of these vital areas in a purely immediate economic perspective.

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Conversely, if we want to change man's relationship with nature, we must use the resources in these protected areas to develop their cultural appeal, since as areas of scientific, tourist and educational interest these zones have much to teach us.

Of course, the considerable advantages that I have just mentioned will not be without their difficulties: that's also why I wanted to meet with you.

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I therefore think it is important that today we cover the difficulties that the development of these zones is facing, both in terms of definition and creation as well as daily management.

Among these difficulties, the size of marine protected areas, which are currently too fragmented to have an impact globally. How can we increase them and more importantly with what resources to ensure they are monitored and developed? How can we support their operation as part of a network, an essential basis for a worldwide strategy?

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Behind these issues affecting their local and global effectiveness, there is of course the question of a coordinated status for marine protected areas which can be adapted to regional situations that arise.

There is of course also the issue of resources allocated to the protection of these sites, protection which must be connected to the assessment of their economic impact in the long terme.

As you can see, there are many subjects to discuss and I'm afraid that this day will not be enough to cover them all exhaustively. /.

I hope nevertheless that it will enable us to establish practical paths for a more harmonious cohabitation between man and the sea and more responsible use of the planet's marine resources. So, I wish that we give a message of which you have the project.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Before handing over to you, I would like to reiterate the importance I place in this meeting of the Monaco Blue Initiative.

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By bringing together the specialists that you are, for this practical and altruistic discussion, I believe that we are forging an effective method for understanding all environmental problems. And I am not at all surprised that the marine issue has created this opening.

In ancient Greek mythology, the titan Oceanus, an enormous river encircling the earth, drew the outline of the human world. By a curious irony of history, I sometimes feel in many ways, that the Ocean and its coasts once again embody the boundary of our life, our action on earth and our view of the world.

Thank you.