

(Introduction)

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be among you for this dinner dedicated to a topic that is dear to me, and which above all needs to be discussed pragmatically.

When addressing such topics, an over-theoretical or too general vision of the issues at stake is often discouraging because for the numerous difficulties that need to be challenged.

I doubt that a unique universal solution can be reached in this area.

At a time when we are all wondering about our ability to act to save our environment, and especially our marine environment, representing over seventy percent of the Earth's surface, it is essential that we adopt an efficient approach that will enable us to move forward.

The development of marine protected areas is currently among the measures that show the most promise.

Wherever they have been implemented, they have proved their efficiency at many levels such as biodiversity conservation, regeneration of resources, economic and social development of the local populations, implementation of innovative cooperation measures. They prelude a new governance of maritime areas.

To support the development of these marine areas, like many of my initiatives focused on environmental protection, the flexibility in terms of intervention and the responsiveness towards these issues are invaluable assets.

Thanks to the actions of my Foundation and the ones implemented by my Government, several initiatives in this field have been conducted, which I would like now to touch upon briefly.

First of all, we provide support to specific initiatives such as the preservation of the monk seal's natural habitat in the Mediterranean. We are also involved in several programs in the Mediterranean sea, the Indian ocean, the Arctic and the Pacific ocean. Monaco has been the instigator of one of the first preservation areas for sea mammals in the Mediterranean with the Pelagos sanctuary, set up over ten years ago in cooperation with France and Italy.

Another example is the creation, by my father thirty years ago, of the first protected coastal areas in Monaco, the Larvotto Reserve.

Action needs preparation through the launch of a broader dialogue, such as the one conducted by the Monaco Blue Initiative for the past four years. In 2010, I was keen to create a Forum for discussion bringing together the major players involved in sea issues: political leaders, NGOs, corporations and of course scientists.

Together we share our views, in a practical manner, on topics that are critical to the future of the seas, as well as marine protected areas. The goal is to deliver concrete proposals.

Our discussions regularly highlight the main challenges of further developing marine protected areas. Among them, I would like to focus on three aspects.

The first concerns improvements to the existing legal and political structures.

Too often, marine protected areas suffer from the legal ambiguities and political complexities imposed by their implementation. Due to the absence of a universal framework, the experiences are usually difficult to expand, reproduce or reinforce. Therefore, it seems essential to think of ways for improvement, sometimes simple, but which alone will lead to their proper development.

The second important point, but sadly not very original, to which we are often brought back is the lack of funds.

In Nagoya in 2010, the target was set to create a network of marine protected areas covering at least 10% of the world's ocean and coastal surfaces. This goal is of course modest, when the current situation would call for around 20% of all seas being under protected status.

Yet we also know that unfortunately only 1,5% of their surface benefits today from such a status and that a huge amount of money, some quote about 35 billion dollars, has already been invested in this field.

The nature of the problem is clear: in a period of crisis such as ours, it is also - and perhaps primarily - financial.

The solution must be found beyond the *ad hoc* meetings of bodies within the UN framework, and also implies strong commitment, based first and foremost on the mobilisation of as many people as possible, over and above politics and also including economic circles.

To advance the cause of marine protected areas, we need to convince decision-makers and public opinion of the imperative to find a new way of using sea resources.

To convince the people first, especially those living of the sea economy, who are the most directly concerned - and often regrettably the most reticent due to insufficient information. We need to reiterate to the concerned populations that marine protected areas are instrumental in fostering their development.

I think that some countries, particularly the island states, are already aware of the interest of these protected areas.

For example, I am thinking of the President of the Republic of Kiribati who took part in the last session of the Monaco Blue Initiative, and of the President of Republic of Palau to whom I will pay a visit in spring, both have founded their development on a maritime areas preservation's strategy.

I am also thinking of larger States with greater influence, such as Chile, which has created extensive marine areas, with the specific concern of ensuring the sustainability of its economic activities largely based on fishing.

Finally, Russia, President Putin and I have spoken on several occasions about the importance of these areas in the Arctic. He showed interest in them and was open to think about the establishment of protected areas in former military zones in this extremely fragile region.

We also have to convince private stakeholders, and in particular corporations, which have a key role to play and which need to understand that their future is dependent on sustainable development that is respectful of resources, and not on the short-term predation of our common heritage.

That is why I very much welcome the initiative that brings us together today. It gives us a real reason for hope that our discussions, I am sure, will confirm.

Thank you.