

Reception - Taormina Filmfest Humanitarian Award - 16th June 2013
Address of H.S.H. the Prince

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I am delighted to be here with you today for this important occasion. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the organisers of the festival and to all the individuals to whom I owe this eminent distinction.

I wish to thank them for the honour they are conferring upon me with this award, which gives me the incentive to pursue my efforts. But I would equally like to thank them for placing me today in the category of humanitarian players.

As you know, many of my activities are dedicated to ecological issues. The Foundation I created in 2006 is thus focused on three priorities: the fight against climate change, the preservation of biodiversity and water management. And I strive to do everything possible to protect our environment in my running of the Principality, as well as in my cooperation efforts and my involvement in international negotiations.

Some may be surprised to see these commitments considered as humanitarian. Yet I know that the ills that afflict nature also affect humanity.

Having visited so many regions where nature is under particular threat, I know that the populations are always the victims of these upheavals. And among these populations, it is always the weakest that pay the highest price for this disruption in nature.

From Bangladesh to Louisiana, from the Sahel to China, it is the most vulnerable who are the victims of climate disturbance: those whose living conditions are confined to makeshift accommodation and exposed to climatic hazards; those for whom each and every day is a challenge. And it is also they who suffer from land degradation, damage to biodiversity and water pollution.

That is why I have always believed that action in favour of the environment is, and perhaps above all, a commitment in favour of the populations. Those who are suffering today, as well as those who risk suffering tomorrow as a consequence of our current irresponsibility.

It is for them that we are fighting and with them that we are able to advance.

Because it is by building on men and women's thirst for progress that we will be able to change things. It is by responding to their dreams for a better life, for themselves and for their

children, that we will be able to lead them along the path towards a lifestyle that is more respectful of both people and nature.

I know that such concerns may seem far removed. For all those who, like us, live in temperate climates, under the fair skies of the Mediterranean, the temptation is strong to assume that they are immune to feared adverse events.

Yet this would be a serious delusion. Because the events which result in our environment becoming weaker and threaten its sustainability spare no region, no country and no people. Faced with this global threat, we stand united, whatever our own particular living conditions. And the Mediterranean offers, more than any other region, a concentration of the dangers facing us.

This small sea, which represents less than 1% of the world's marine area, is one of its biodiversity reservoirs, with regard both to its fauna and flora.

However, this reserve, as fragile as it is essential, is today very widely polluted. It is estimated that close to one million tonnes of oil is dumped into it every year, in addition to 60,000 tonnes of detergent, 100 tonnes of mercury and 12,000 tonnes of phenols. Added to this are the many years of irresponsible exploitation of certain species, such as the bluefin tuna, as well as the effects of global warming which have already begun...

More importantly, the Mediterranean is now one of the most densely populated regions in the world, with almost five hundred million inhabitants living in its limited area, of whom one hundred and fifty million live along the coastline, not to mention close to three hundred million tourists every year...

Due to a lack of adequate infrastructure, close to 30 million people around the Mediterranean still have no access to drinking water and 180 million live below the water poverty line, which is 1000 cubic metres per year and per inhabitant. Furthermore, 70% of the people living on the shores of our sea are not connected to any water treatment system...

This is why, in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, the ecological crisis is inseparable from health, food and social crises for the populations, the majority of whom are from the Southern coast and subjected to increasing pressures. The resulting increased imbalance can only lead to rising tensions of all kinds, in particular regarding the fight for resources and migratory pressure...

Ladies and Gentlemen, such is the reality today. Such is the reason for my commitment - a commitment that you are honouring this evening with this award.

But I do not wish to conclude on such a sombre note.

However serious the situation is, it is not hopeless. Not yet.

This is a pivotal era. We are living at a unique time: a time where we are already aware and can still do something.

We are fortunate in having an exceptional amount of knowledge at hand, which is paving the way already for a more sustainable development strategy. From month to month, we see more and more innovations opening up extremely promising opportunities.

Of course, the transition in which we are engaged won't be easy. But we can clearly see that, despite their difficulties, the men and women of this century want to break with the pattern for destruction whose threats they have perceived. The ecological cause has made significant progress across the globe over the last twenty years. From China to the United States, we need to listen to and support the consciousness that is emerging all around the world.

As the former American Vice-President and Nobel Prize winner, Al Gore, whose commitment achieved so much for the environmental cause, so rightly said "It is about who we are as human beings. It is about our capacity to transcend our own limitations, to rise to this new occasion. To see with our hearts, as well as our heads (...). »

Thank you.