

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would like to begin by thanking you, dear Pierre Erwes, as well as Mrs. Erwes and your entire team, for having taken the initiative for this dinner.

Despite the tremendous amount of work required to organize this BioMarine Convention, you wished to gather us here for this moment of shared friendship and our common commitment. This has deeply touched me.

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As we were reminded today, despite the daunting threats weighing on the seas and oceans, solutions do exist.

The force of today's discussions lies in proving this and highlighting the many initiatives and successes that were presented.

It is my personal belief that this aspect of environmental conservation is all too often brushed aside: if we willingly pinpoint the hazards that threaten us, we too rarely emphasize the ideas and projects that actually succeed. In short, our worst enemy is discouragement.

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Let's remember La Rochefoucauld's words:
"Nothing is so contagious as example."

This is why we are here: to support examples of positive initiatives, projects that prove their worth day after day, whether in the Polar reaches, developing countries or the Mediterranean Basin, to mention only the three main areas where my Foundation is active.

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In each of these, we are progressing. We support local and international NGOs that provide help for people. We maintain dialogue with the scientific community to devise more responsible forms of development. We work with local populations to set up ecologically viable and economically sustainable solutions. We seek to enhance the natural heritage, too long neglected. We help in reconstructing damaged wilderness areas. We participate in programs to save endangered species.

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Thus, we are progressing, convinced that each of these initiatives will help inspire others. Most of all, we are convinced that each of these advances is already a victory over discouragement.

To pursue our course, we need the widest support and mobilization possible mobilization and support. This is why I would like to thank you for being here tonight, for your commitment and support.