

"The State of the Oceans in the Modern World" - Commonwealth Club –San Francisco, 24th February 2014
Address of H.S.H. the Prince

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is an honour for me to stand today at this podium where so many great and bright minds have stood for more than a century. And it is a pleasure to do so on the occasion of a trip where the dominant theme is the friendship between Monaco and the United States of America.

This friendship is based on deep ties. Those that my great great grandfather Prince Albert I forged in the early 20th century during the long and productive visits he made to your country. Those that my mother, Princess Grace, inextricably American and Monegasque, maintained passionately throughout her entire life. Those that I myself pursued by studying here and by coming back as often as possible. Finally those that endure on a daily basis through the discussions and meetings between Americans and Monegasques giving life every year to the friendship between our two countries.

It is in the name of this friendship that I have come to speak to you about an issue that I hold particularly close to my heart: the oceans and their situation in the world.

I am pleased to do this here in California, in this State where many innovative and bold initiatives have been taken; initiatives that often serve as models for the promoters of a development which has greater respect for nature.

However I know that your country is sometimes divided regarding these issues.

Some of you, perhaps even here, may think that it is excessive to devote so much energy and time to causes that do not appear to be among the most urgent.

The oceans are so vast and so deep that there is no need to worry about them. The Planet has survived many changes; it will adapt to the changes the future has in store. Humanity, with its limited resources, cannot modify the changes in nature. Finally, our world in crisis is experiencing greater emergencies, more intense sufferings which are more deserving of our energy.

I am aware of these arguments, but I would nonetheless like to try and convince everyone here of the need to take action against the threats I have just referred to. Because by preserving the environment, and in particular the oceans which, we must not forget, cover

more than 70% of the world's surface, it is simply a question of making sure that future generations live on a planet which is not hostile towards them.

The desire to take action for the sake of the future is precisely what guides me, both in the efforts I undertake as the Head of the Monegasque State and in my environmental commitment, via the Foundation I created in 2006.

This Foundation, dedicated to the fight against climate change, the protection of biodiversity and the preservation of the Planet's water resources, has taken part in over two hundred projects across the globe. It has therefore enabled me to better assess the problems of our environment and the ways of addressing them.

Based on this experience, I would therefore like to share with you the reasons why I believe that the dangers hanging over our marine environment today are real and must be countered as quickly as possible.

Whatever their extent, in fact these dangers are all of human origin, whether they be a direct or indirect result. I will start with the first of them: global warming.

Global warming on our planet is no longer questioned today. We must applaud the large number of scientists, those from the IPCC in particular, who have been carrying out decisive research on these issues for years: we have expert knowledge of this increase in temperature.

We know its magnitude, which was 0.6° Celsius during the 20th century, and that this trend has accelerated over the last few decades. We know that it could rise to 4.8° Celsius by the end of this century if nothing is done to stop it.

For years we have observed its consequences on the oceans: the rising sea levels, due mainly to the melting polar ice, the fragility of the habitats of many species, and the disruption of entire ecosystems. Others, less obvious, are also beginning to appear, such as ocean acidification, brought to light in particular by the Monaco Declaration in 2009, signed by one hundred and fifty scientists and which results from the role the ocean plays in the absorption of CO₂ emissions which are linked primarily to the use of fossil energies and deforestation. These observations should spur us into action before it is too late.

The same reasoning applies to the other impacts of human activity on the oceans.

When 40% of the global population lives less than 60 kilometers from the coastline, where already eight of the world's ten largest urban areas are situated, when almost 80% of trans-

continental trade takes place by ship, all or nearly all our activities have an impact on the balance of our seas and are seriously jeopardising them. All observations have sadly confirmed this.

Whether it be land-based pollution released offshore, maritime pollution, the weakening of the marine ecosystems or overfishing, most of the data we have collected today are alarming. Some regions, such as the Mediterranean which is so dear to my heart, or the polar regions for which I take action, are seeing their vital balance very directly threatened. Their preservation is however essential for the entire Planet.

In the same way, many animal species are currently endangered by irresponsible fishing practices. I am thinking, among others, of the bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean, for which I have fought very hard over the last few years... but I could also mention sharks, whose stocks have probably decreased by 80% in the last half century following excessive and cruel industrial practices.

The damage from such irresponsible fishing extends well beyond the fish stocks. It also affects the environment and the ocean floor, today regularly destroyed by deep sea trawling.

As for aquaculture, although it may seem to offer encouraging prospects, it must be conducted in a sustainable manner. I would like to point out that five kilos of fish converted into flour is often necessary to produce just one kilo of fresh fish and is also the source of many adverse effects: methane releases, pollution, transmission of animal disease, proliferation of micro-algae, migration of domestic species to natural environments and the weakening of wild species...

Yet its extremely rapid development - 6% per year over the past twenty years – has made it a very important business today with a global production already equivalent to that of beef. Consequently it also contributes to the weakening of the marine ecosystems.

In addition to these threats to ocean life, there are the prospects for the mining of new off-shore resources, until now inaccessible, but which technological progress is enabling us or will soon enable us to exploit. I am thinking of hydrocarbons in particular, the largest reserves available today of which are located under the sea, and in regions which are often still preserved, such as the Arctic where their exploitation presents multiple risks.

Whether it be oil spills, as we were tragically reminded four years ago by the Deepwater Horizon disaster, or less visible degradation related to the disruption caused to the ocean floor

by these offshore installations, everywhere the dangers are tremendous and the techniques often still poorly managed. This would be even more so in the event of a disaster affecting the extremely fragile Arctic regions...

Finally, I would like to complete this bleak scenario by pointing out that all these phenomena have serious geopolitical implications. On a planet subjected to strong tensions, against a backdrop of numerous crises, and as the human population grows rapidly, these threats to resources can have multiple repercussions.

Faced with so many difficulties, should we resign ourselves to disaster?

I don't think so. Because although our marine environment has never been so threatened before, never have we been so aware of these threats... and above all, never have we had so many ways of stopping them.

Although we lived for such a long time without realising the damage we were inflicting on the Planet, believing that its resources were inexhaustible and its ecological balance invulnerable, we now know how fragile it is. Scientific studies have alerted us year after year about the dangers of our irresponsible behaviour. People from the world over are listening to them, and are seeing in their daily lives the disruption unfolding before them. They are concerned about their life and that of their children. From the United States to China, from Europe to Oceania, new global awareness is emerging and is calling for concrete action.

Such action is complex to implement because in order to address global phenomena, common will and determination are needed, so difficult to bring about. Conflicting interests inevitably appear which hamper any action. Having taken part in most international negotiations dedicated to the environment since 1992 and the Rio Summit, I have been able to gauge the strength of these interests.

But I have also been able to see the progress made. That is why I do not want to lose hope of the international community, which I know will eventually make the decisions that are necessary... I only hope that it will not do so too late: this is the sense of my determined commitment. And I hope to be able to count on the driving force of your great country, the n° 1 maritime power in the world, to make a contribution.

In this respect I would like to insist on the fact that still today, the area we call the high seas, namely the waters which extend beyond those where States exercise jurisdiction, and which in fact represent half of the Planet's surface, are subject to virtually no governance measures.

They therefore remain a kind of legal jungle, where the most abusive practices are carried out with impunity...

The implementation of a legal instrument regulating them is, as you know, the topic of discussions at the United Nations within the framework of negotiations on the Montego Bay Convention which governs the law of the sea. But the very principle of such an instrument is still far from being achieved and I would like to remind you that the Montego Bay Convention, the only tool we have to manage the seas of our Planet, has still not been ratified by the United States... This is therefore a key issue to which I am fully committed.

However I also know that international negotiations are not everything and that if we want to provide concrete solutions now to the problems of the world's oceans, it is also necessary not to overlook local and regional actions and solutions.

Because all these global issues always have local causes or consequences for which it is easier to take action. Whether it be pollution, management of resources or the preservation of species, many problems can thus be resolved efficiently on a smaller scale.

This is the aim of conservation measures that are increasingly being adopted. In most seas, marine protected areas make it possible to give the status of sanctuary to vast expanses and to enable their fauna and flora to regenerate. The protection of these areas leads to the replenishment of the stocks and thus promotes fishing in the vicinity. As a result, the situation of the local populations is significantly improved and the foundations for a sustainable eco-friendly economy are established.

These marine protected areas are currently being developed in a promising way. They have in fact increased tenfold over the last decade and the UN estimates that 8.3 million square kilometers, i.e. 2.3% of the globe's oceans, are now protected. But these results are still far from the 10% target established by the international community and that many scientists estimate should be at around 20%. It is therefore essential that we mobilise our efforts for this, that each country gets involved.

I wish to applaud here the efforts made by the United States of America whose waters are home to the largest marine area in the world and who have placed a significant proportion of their territorial waters under protected status, even if the definitions and levels of protection vary.

The same concern for progress, despite the difficulties, should spur us into intensifying innovative technical solutions which may help us protect our seas and combat global

warming.

I am thinking especially of clean energies whose development will allow us to curb global warming. In addition to offshore wind power, which is now a mature technology, the seas themselves can be sources of renewable energies, whether it be the use of the swell, the tides, the currents, the biomass or the simple difference in temperatures. This is what we have chosen to develop in Monaco for the past half century, with heat pumps using sea water that cover 20% of our energy requirements.

So many solutions are beginning to prove their worth. And the Principality of Monaco, active with regard to these issues, aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, thanks to, but not exclusively due to, their implementation, which will also involve of course a proactive energy efficiency policy and the promotion of clean vehicles.

All these solutions, which I have only briefly mentioned here, show us that the oceans, so badly mistreated, can also provide solutions that generate growth, development and hope. Although it poses major threats, the current situation also is full of hope.

We know that changing the model so as to enable us to save the Planet and its oceans will be long and difficult. After all, this means radically reinventing our relationship with the environment and developing new ways of living. That is why the main thing today is to trace a path, to refuse all fate and resignation, to believe in humanity's ability to reconcile with its environment, before it is too late.

As your compatriot, Sylvia Earle, the great oceanographer and deep sea explorer, whom I deeply admire, said "It is the worst of times but it is the best of times because we still have a chance. »

I came to tell you not to let this chance slip by.

Thank you.