

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

With the United Nations' choice of Brazil to host this essential meeting for the future of our Planet, twenty years after the first Rio Summit, it is important for us to take the time to evoke the threat on forests.

Because Brazil, with its 5.3 million square kilometres of forests is one of the countries richest in this field.

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Because - alas! - the emblematic Amazon forest is also emblematic of the threats weighing on all our forests.

But also mostly because forests concentrate the majority of issues on the agenda for this Summit. Conservation of biodiversity, fight against climate change, regeneration of water reserves, preservation of landscapes : we must tirelessly emphasise the crucial role of forests in our world.

In this respect, we must highlight and applaud the vigilance of the United Nations and its agencies, FAO in particular. By making 2011 the year of forests, the UN helped give a great impulse on this theme.

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Concerned about these matters, I was able to observe that this impulse had found many developments, especially in Europe where major initiatives have been undertaken in favour of forests in a recent period.

An issue as vast as that of forests, with all its economic, social and political ramifications, and the stakes that cut across borders and continents, obviously requires the mobilisation of international organizations. They alone can take grasp of the problem as a whole and provide responses associating the States and the players concerned.

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But, beyond such politic decisions, there are elements that I believe to be determinant, whose contribution must always be emphasised. It includes the mobilisation of people, civil society, local initiatives and large associations, economic systems and consumers. It is also a commitment on the part of all those who strive daily towards the conservation of forests and who feel concerned by their Planet's future and are not resigned to remaining powerless.

And it is the combination of all these initiatives, modest or ambitious, global or local, that aims to stop the inexorable degradation of the Planet's forests.

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Indeed, the large-scale changes we wish to see are usually the result of individual or local initiatives.

This is how, for example, I supported the Billion Tree Campaign launched by UNEP from 2006 to 2011, which resulted in planting over twelve billion trees throughout the world thanks to the commitment of tens of thousands of people.

This is also the purpose of the Foundation I created in 2006, which supports several initiatives towards the conservation of forest ecosystems in North America as in the Congo Basin, in Latin America as in Indonesia.

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This Foundation, which also strives for better awareness of the true value of these ecosystems, is also dedicated to the development of sustainable exploitation of timber. For us, it means promoting a reasonable approach to economic activities, shipbuilding in particular, with the Wood Forever program.

In Monaco, these actions are relayed by my Government, along with many associations and economic players within the context of the program called ‘Monaco against Deforestation’.

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I believe all these initiatives are vital.

But it is equally as essential to integrate them in viable economic projects for the populations directly concerned.

Indeed, if forests have suffered and continue to suffer as much from depredation, it is because they have always had an essential economic role for humankind. As shelters, sources of energy, reserves for potential drugs and food, they still have a crucial role it would be vain to deny, while we know that today nearly 500 million people depend on forests for their very subsistence.

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To save the forests, we cannot ignore their economic dimension, a dimension we must enhance in a fair, responsible way for the entire Planet. As we can see in the Amazon, every forest concerns humankind as a whole.

Finding different ways of enhancing forests and integrating them into more sustainable forms of development and encouraging the participation of local populations. These goals are in no way contradictory and offer a process we now know to be viable, for having witnessed the implementation of its principles in certain conservation zones, we must extend today.

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This objective, of course, cannot be achieved in a few months or years. Please allow me to remind you that forests represent one-third of the land on our Planet. It will take decades at least for humans to adopt an attitude of preservation rather than predation.

In the words of Professor Wangari Maathai, one of the greatest advocates of forests, with whom I had the pleasure of working often: “You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them.”

Thank you.