

Mr Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I'm very pleased to be here with you today in order to continue the essential dialogue begun relating to the Arctic.

With a subject of such importance, I am delighted that Russia, its people and its very highest authorities are involved, represented here by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, to whom I offer my warmest greetings.

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I am most especially pleased with the steadfast nature of your commitment, with this second forum, following on from that in which we met last year, confirming that long-term sustained action is possible, simply in order to produce solutions relating to the Arctic.

For me this truly is a sign of hope, in a context which remains, as you are aware, of great concern.

Everyone here is aware of the thousand-fold hazards which threaten the Arctic, the majority of which were dealt with during our work last year.

I hadn't intended to touch on this topic again, but the very recent and converging observations of scientists lead me to do so.

As you know, over the last few days, we have seen that the sea ice has receded to levels sadly approaching those of 2007. This situation has and will have direct and indirect consequences, of which everyone is aware. Today, scientists are led to believe that the summer sea ice is very likely to disappear completely within the next few years.

In the light of this situation, of its impact on the lifestyles of the populations living in these regions, such as wild fauna, adaptation measures are of course necessary and I will say a few words about this in a moment.

But the international community cannot remain in its current state of passivity and abstain from any quantified commitment, once the Kyoto Protocol expires. The resolute continuation of mitigation measures by reducing human-induced greenhouse gas emissions is a strategy that must not sink into oblivion.

When dealing with the question of the transportation that has brought us together once more, I feel it is important that we place the populations involved at the centre of our considerations. We all understand that nothing can be done which is against their interests and which goes against their deepest aspirations.

What are these aspirations? Conservation of the environment, of course; but also, I believe, a desire for progress. A desire for scientific and technical progress, naturally, but above all social progress, enabling each individual to choose their own destiny, whilst respecting their ancestral cultures.

As a symbol of this freedom to which everyone aspires, transportation is at the heart of the Arctic's future. This is especially so since it is experiencing burgeoning growth, which is already exposing the equilibrium of the region to a number of dangers.

Naturally, the dream of the Arctic protected from mankind may be appealing, but it would be dangerous to ignore reality. The development of transportation in the Arctic, the consequences of climatic warming, just like the increasing cost of hydrocarbons, is now inescapable. This is why it must be subject to a guided and structured approach.

This means that we must ensure that what should mean progress for all does not turn into an environmental crisis as the result of excessive 'laissez-faire' or over-idealism.

The smallest incidents in the Arctic can, as we know, have very serious consequences. To prevent such accidents, therefore, rules must be laid down today and a strict framework created and accepted. These must enable everyone to pursue their activities without risk of prejudice to the collective good.

The same applies to exploitation of sub-marine resources in the Arctic. This has also become inevitable due to current pressure upon mineral and hydrocarbon resources

Faced with these prospects, States now have a responsibility to establish a rigorous framework, not only in terms of environmental issues, but also a political framework, through agreements like those drawn up between Russia and Norway relating to the Barents Sea.

Here again this involves setting strict limits on the development of activities which are of legitimate concern to public opinion, but which may also result in significant advances. It would, in fact, be dangerous to automatically place ecological concerns in opposition to economic issues, as if both were inevitably doomed to come into confrontation.

Although the search for profit has very often been, and still is, the cause of the problems that we encounter, a clear-sighted implementation of market economics can allow us to find appropriate solutions.

I offer as proof of this the example of protected maritime zones, which we dealt with last year. In my opinion these areas are a shining example of what may be done to allow a concerted reconciliation of economic requirements and environmental necessities.

I offer a reminder that their success stems from three factors. First of all, the ecological benefits: protection and regeneration of the natural heritage. Secondly, economic benefits: the creation of no-fishing zones which allow fish stocks, the size of fish and their ability to reproduce to increase. Finally, cultural benefits associated with scientific, tourism and educational activities which are developing in these areas.

These conservation areas thus allow contradictory human aspirations and needs to be reconciled, whilst ensuring a guaranteed future.

This is why I work as hard as possible towards developing protected maritime zones, a convincing example of which has been established by Monaco, France and Italy in the Mediterranean: the PELAGOS refuge, which is today improving the situation by creating an essential conservation area for marine mammals.

Similar projects are pursuing similar objectives in various regions throughout the world, both in areas of economic importance to States and on the high seas. Commitments made last year during the biodiversity Convention conference at Nagoya are, I believe, fundamental in this respect and must be adhered to.

These zones must therefore be developed, in particular by assigning formerly militarised areas to these activities since the latter areas have not in general been exposed to commercial activities. This can certainly be done in the Arctic. In addition, this would act as a signal in a world where aggression and rivalries are, little by little, becoming less distinct and are being replaced by dialogue and a search for common objectives.

It is in this spirit that a think-tank has been initiated in Monaco which gathers together political, scientific and business leaders as part of the Monaco Blue Initiative.

With this issue, as with any question which combines economic ambitions and ecological objectives, it is essential that it is based upon a dialogue involving all the participants concerned, such as we are doing today.

Dialogue with scientists, simply in order to meet the technical challenges that we face, whether the latter are associated with specific issues of maritime and air travel in the polar regions, or more generally with increased consideration of the need to ensure environmental protection.

Dialogue with populations, for whom transportation must above all represent a tremendous opportunity to become involved with the rest of the world and play a full part in modern life.

Dialogue with States, as well as multilateral authorities, who are the essential players in the majority of the investments to be made and who are, above all, guarantors of the stability of the Arctic regions and of their environmental protection.

Finally, dialogue with the environmental community, NGOs or national and international public institutions, who must be able to understand the need to form alliances with players who may be invaluable partners for them.

I believe that we can, through such a dialogue, achieve a balance. A balance that is necessarily difficult to maintain between attitudes which are often contradictory. But a balance which is necessary in order to ensure that the world can move forward without sacrificing either its ideals of progress, or its natural basis, using all its talents and all its energies, towards a truly sustainable future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

A little over a century ago, my great-great-grandfather, Prince Albert the 1st, a man of letters and adventurer, was one of the first Western Heads of State to explore the Arctic.

What he found there, under obviously difficult conditions, left him deeply moved.

On his return he wrote: "In the majestic purity of the Arctic spaces, the affairs which rouse the passions of men were reduced to an infinitesimal scale, whereas the absolute values of life grew under the influence of justice and truth ".

During my travels in this region I have myself experienced this magic of the Arctic, which makes us put the chance occurrences of everyday life into perspective, and inspires higher feelings in us.

I hope that it can provide us with guidance in the actions we take and convince us, both for our own benefit and that of our children, to choose together the way of dialogue, justice and truth.

Thank you.