

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Friends,

I am delighted to address you in the context of today's Oceans Day series of meetings.

The ocean is a key, universal, vital element. It raises our awareness and bears the scars of the invisible damage done to the world. It renders this damage a perceptible reality for each of us. It heightens our awareness of the dangers that threaten all of us.

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By all of us I mean everyone represented here today, myself included, who come from countries whose horizons are dominated by the sea. Countries for which the harm inflicted on the marine element will have considerable consequences.

By all of us, I also mean the human race, for which oceans are fundamental and irreplaceable.

They are sources of food, industry, energy. They are the lungs of our planet, precious generators of oxygen. They are indispensable thermal regulators that attenuate climactic warming. Last but not least, they are the places of dreams, catalysts of progress and adventure, gateways to infinity, reservoirs of life and hope. .../...

Unfortunately, they are now the arena of new fears, new challenges.

Global warming, threats to biodiversity, endangerment of our ecosystems, overexploitation, pollution... the oceans concentrate the main problems afflicting our planet. It is for this reason that their preservation is so important yet so difficult.

This is because the sea is a living world, beyond frontiers, an extremely complex universe - still largely unknown.

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Everyone here is aware of the facts. However, as I am opening this day, I would nevertheless like to take this opportunity of listing them briefly:

- warming of the oceans, with the resulting threats to fauna, flora and populations that depend on marine resources;
- rising sea levels, causing upheaval in our weather systems, freak climatic incidents and upheaval for ecosystems;
- threat to the polar regions, which I have personally witnessed;
- acidification of the oceans, a key topic of the Declaration of Monaco in January of this year.

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Such are the main dangers threatening the oceans today, these immense areas that we thought eternal and in contrast to which, up until very recently, man appeared so fragile.

The opposite is now true. Man is now the source of the danger. We pose a danger to our environment, our planet, to ourselves, through the damage inflicted on the biosphere as a whole and the excesses of a frantic race for growth that we need to curb before it is too late.

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The effects of global warming are not the only ones impacting the oceans. Other threats are building up: economic rivalries over resources, mineral or fishing, battles for control of the ocean floor, commercial stakes associated with the new routes opened up in the Polar regions. These are the areas in which we can act now, on condition that we equip ourselves with the necessary tools.

Faced with so many challenges, we need to display inventiveness, determination and courage. It is for this reason that today's meeting plays an important role in COP 15 by raising the immediate problem of preserving the oceans in all their richness and diversity.

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We need to convince our contemporaries of the vital importance of the changes that we need make to the way in which we lead our lives, produce, consume.

The risk lies in believing that a new green growth will be able to replace our current systems, purely and simply, effortlessly, with no self-examination. The risk lies in neglecting to perform the necessary calling to account incumbent on all of us.

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Therefore we need to be inventive not only in terms of the ways in which we manage our resources but also in the manufacturing, farming and financial sectors.

We also need to develop clean, innovative technological solutions whose sources can be found in the oceans.

Finally, we need to formulate effective multi-lateral action that addresses and reconciles divergent interests: those of the States that border the oceans, economic players, populations, as well as those of future generations.

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Obviously, all this must take place within the context of the United Nations and the spirit of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Fortunately increasing numbers of zones are a haven amidst the implacable logic of overexploitation and destruction. To cite a case with which I am familiar, involving marine mammals, I would like to draw your attention to the PELAGOS plankton sanctuary agreement, concluded between Monaco, France and Italy, which is an example of concerted international action, born out of the will and sense of responsibility of the three coastal States concerned.

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Other sanctuary zones in the Pacific, Atlantic or Antarctic, pursue the same objective. Alas, they are too few and far between for their development to have little more than a purely local impact as they only represent 0.1% of the marine surface area. In contrast, 10% of the terrestrial surface areas are the object of protection measures!

In numerous places around the world, initiatives are being taken which will enhance the protection of our maritime resources. Each of us, on our own scale, can contribute to progress and blaze a trail for new actions.

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For its part, the Principality of Monaco is involved in the preservation of its marine environment, the Mediterranean, which is one of the most threatened zones.

Monaco is home to the headquarters of international institutions such as ACCOBAMS, dedicated to the protection of cetaceans, and the CIESM Mediterranean Scientific Commission. It feels a special sense of responsibility towards the sea. Moreover, as part of the Monaco Blue Initiative launched to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the Musée Océanographique, thirty prominent international figures are set to congregate there in March of next year to reflect on the balance between man and the ocean, the preservation of the deep and safeguard of our great marine species.

My Foundation, which campaigns for biodiversity, preservation of water resources and the prevention of global warming, is also involved in initiatives designed to protect maritime areas and marine species.

All of these actions are part of a long tradition whose origin can be traced back to my great great grandfather, Prince Albert I, who directed several oceanic expeditions and founded the Musée Océanographique (Oceanographic Museum) one hundred years ago.

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Closer to home, the Centre Scientifique (Scientific Centre) conducts research on the marine environment. It has an international reputation amongst scientists, in particular in the field of coral bio mineralisation.

Ladies & Gentlemen, Friends,

The oceans are the last partially unexplored areas of our planet. They also bear the brunt of the ravages that we are inflicting on our environment.

This is why their preservation is of prime importance for humanity.

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By protecting the threatened seas now, Man will be able to enter a new era: that of sustainable, shared development, for humanity as a whole.

For populations that live along the shorelines and those far away.

For all of us and for generations to come.

Thank you.