

Signore e Signori,

Cari amici,

Sono felice di essere oggi qui con voi, in quei luoghi carichi di storia e dove soffia il vento della conoscenza, per parlare di un argomento che Mi sta particolarmente a cuore: quello del cambiamento climatico e dei pericoli che fa gravare sul nostro pianeta, sui nostri modi di vita, e vicino a noi, sui nostri siti e nostri ghiacciai alpini.

To address this climate change, the Principality of Monaco strives to act in a responsible manner. Such responsibility guides my action and that of my Government.

It is under the banner of such responsibility that I myself am directly involved in international fora where the future of our planet is at stake, especially at an environmental level.

And it is under the same banner that I set up a Foundation dedicated to environmental protection in 2006. With over three hundred projects implemented or supported in less than ten years, this Foundation has successfully demonstrated its know-how, founded on a field-based approach, the establishment of partnerships with local players and the unwavering support of scientific expertise.

I often see that this commitment, which guides my action, is faced with various challenges, the main one being the misleading impression that these dangers are distant, complex and abstract.

When economic crisis, unemployment, war and epidemics afflict our contemporaries, they naturally have a tendency to deal with the most immediate concerns and to push into the background dangers, which although often are more serious, are not immediately apparent.

Rising temperatures, acidifying oceans and dying-out species make no noise. They provide few spectacular images for our media-oriented society. There are still only few victims who are able to testify to the damage we are inflicting on future generations.

Yet this damage is real. Thanks to the serious and exhaustive work carried out by various scientific authorities, today we have a very clear picture. And we would be able to see it ourselves were we to cast our eyes away from the turmoil of the news.

In this respect, the topic bringing us together today provides a particularly valuable perspective. Because although we are used to climate change threatening remote lands such as the Arctic, the Sahel and Bangladesh, we struggle to accept that its effects are already being felt here. We often refuse to admit that global warming is already a reality for us.

As such, the work conducted on the Alpine glaciers is irrevocable. All studies converge to affirm that their surface has decreased by approximately 25% over the last forty years. And it is agreed that the melting process has gained momentum over the years.

Although this pattern is not homogenous, it is particularly worrying with regard to certain glaciers, whose very continuity appears to be jeopardised within the space of just a few decades. Should temperatures rise by 3% by the end of this century, almost all the glaciers situated below 4,000m would vanish. The IPCC itself, whose work I follow attentively and with which my Foundation has a close partnership, has dedicated part of its work to these glaciers. Among the hypotheses presented in its latest report, it refers to a melt that could concern as much as 85% of all Alpine ice by the end of this century.

A few hundred kilometres from here, global warming is already a reality. It could soon become a tragedy. Because behind the technical figures, this melting ice will have serious consequences on both our environment and on us.

For the environment, the melting of these glaciers represents severe upheaval. At a local level, it affects major ecosystems, in particular mountain streams. And it alters the water regimes that are dependent on them: the Alpine valleys but also Europe's major rivers such as the Rhine and the Rhone.

In the long-term, there is a real risk of seeing many river flows significantly reduced, when the temporary increase linked to the melting process will have given way to a less abundant supply of glacial water.

And the decreased levels of cold mountain water will of course have an impact on the marine currents which depend on it, as well as on marine fauna and flora, part of which is dependent on this supply of cold freshwater...

These changes will also have economic effects, especially in view of the importance of tourism in the Alps, as well as the role of waterways: from difficulties in water supply for industry and the population, restrictions in waterway traffic, to the declining performance of hydroelectric dams, these consequences have already been confirmed by many scientific studies.

And finally, since we are in Venice, how could I not mention the significant risks posed by the melting ice on global sea levels? With the melting of the Alpine glaciers, but above all of the Polar ice and the “third Pole” – i.e. the Himalayas – the balance of the entire Planet is under serious threat from the rising sea levels.

For this magnificent city, as for many islands and island States with which my Foundation often works, a genuine tragedy risks unfolding before our eyes...

This is undoubtedly the only positive consequence of the melting Alpine glaciers: a wake-up call concerning problems which, as I have just said, seem distant, abstract and uncertain. By highlighting the consequences this melt will have on everyday life in our regions, the studies that have been conducted allow us to make our contemporaries understand the urgent need for concerted, bold and resolute action in order to adapt but also to take action to mitigate them.

Despite the magnitude of the threat and despite its severity, we are not totally powerless. Solutions and prospects exist. Our role and our duty today is to capitalise on them, while there is still time.

I shall not dwell on attempts to preserve the glaciers using covering systems here, as experimented in some winter sports resorts. Whatever the result of these techniques, which I hope will be successful, I would rather focus here on the global aspect of the challenges we face.

Because the warming process taking place in the Alps is the same as the one which is attacking the Poles and weakening the entire Planet. It is a single and identical reality that humanity has to face on a global level, in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility. While the melting of the Alpine glaciers will undoubtedly affect us more directly than that of the Himalayan glaciers, in no way can we think that what is happening in the Himalayas will have no impact here...

That is why the solutions we need to implement must be done at a global level and that is why they are first and foremost of a political nature.

They need to be implemented by the United Nations and will require multilateral efforts to mitigate climate change. They will require strong and binding measures to combat greenhouse gas emissions. They will require coordinated efforts from every country for a true energy transition.

This is the key challenge of the Conference to be held in Paris at the end of the year: a conference whose stakes are extraordinarily high, since it is a question of doing whatever is necessary to limit global warming to below the crucial threshold of 2°C by 2100. In order to do this, we need every government to commit to targeting carbon neutrality by 2070, as the Principality of Monaco has pledged to do, and which it will achieve, I hope, by 2050.

To reach these targets, the next two decades will be decisive and must involve precise and binding action programmes.

These efforts will of course be difficult to carry out. They will be technically complex, expensive and will not be immediately profitable. But our duty is to act in the name of future generations and to do so now, during these few years where we are aware of the dangers, have the tools necessary to change things and the time still to do it.

To achieve this, we need to gain the support of all the players of civil society, who need to take responsibility in urging governments to act, but also in assuming their own responsibility.

Because States alone cannot do everything in the light of a challenge of such magnitude, which concerns all our ways of life. States need citizen involvement and thanks to the latter, corporate involvement.

I am convinced that economic players, more than ever before, not only have a role to play, but a benefit to find in the great adventure of the energy transition. For old Europe in particular, confronted with the scarcity and high cost of energy, renewable and low carbon energies offer unique growth prospects.

These energies are currently at a stage of maturity that enables us to envisage making them more widespread. And their very diversity allows us to develop a wide range of solutions adapted to the realities of each country, of each continent. One only has to think of the potential of solar power for Africa, or of various marine energies for cities like yours, such as for instance the marine heat pumps we have installed in Monaco...

Here we have the seeds of a new growth and in-depth reshuffling of cards on a global level. Because while energy is a significant wealth, it is also at the foundation of all civilisation. Just as coal shaped the 19th century, just as oil played a key role in the 20th century, it is with renewable energies that we should invent the 21st century, and with it a new development model.

These energies alone, thanks to their widespread use, will limit climate change. They alone will make it possible to set up an economy at last freed from hydrocarbons and their many negative effects.

That is why, together, we need to speed up the awareness process among our contemporaries. The whole world needs to have its eyes and heart focused on Paris 2015 because the whole world needs to understand that its future is at stake during these negotiations! However, the whole world must also embrace and implement the change, each at his/her level, with his/her means.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends,

One of the very many and greatest geniuses Italy has given to the world, the great painter and sculptor Michelangelo, said that “The greatest danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark”.

At a time when we are jointly addressing a tremendous challenge, at civilisation level, I think that we should be aware of the opportunity this represents.

With the invention of a new development model, we in fact have the possibility of radically changing our world, of making it not only more sustainable, but also more united, fairer, more responsible. We have the opportunity of passing on to our children a better Planet.

È ovviamente un compito che può sembrare irraggiungibile – e che sarà effettivamente difficile da raggiungere. Però è anche, per la nostra generazione, la possibilità di compiere grandi cose, di ridare senso e speranza ad un mondo che sembra mancare spesso.

Per questo non dobbiamo temere di *mirrare troppo in alto!*

Grazie