

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the floor at the opening session of this symposium dedicated to the oceans.

The issue of the oceans is, as far as I am concerned, a major commitment.

It is part of a family tradition which dates back to my great great grandfather, Prince Albert I one hundred years ago. Known as the Navigator Prince he was in fact one of the founders of modern oceanography and sailed the seas all his life in order to acquire a better understanding of them and shared the knowledge he gained through the renowned Oceanographic Museum he created in Monaco.

This issue is an important part of my national and international commitments, in particular through my participation in multilateral forums.

Finally, it lies at the heart of the missions undertaken by my Foundation, which has been working for the Planet, its climate, its biodiversity and its seas for the past ten years.

You will have realised therefore that this is an issue which I hold particularly close to my heart, all the more so in that the situation of the oceans is, as we are all aware today, of very great concern.

Pollution is building up and gradually destroying the ecosystems. Oil slicks and dumping are causing hydrocarbons to spread. Chemicals, through our waste water, are pervading the seas. Plastic micro particles now constitute a "seventh continent" and are contaminating the entire food chain...

There is also the over-exploitation of marine resources which is taking place in an increasingly destructive fashion. We are extracting hydrocarbons farther and farther away, at deeper and deeper depths, increasing not only the damage inflicted on the environment, but also the risks of an oil slick. Across the globe we are harvesting fish in an increasingly industrial and devastating manner – and with regard to this I am delighted about the recent decision taken by the European Union to limit deep-sea fishing in EU waters.

There are also aquaculture operations which frequently do not respect the basic principles of sustainability; sometimes five kilos of fishmeal is needed to produce one kilo of fish...

There is also ever-mounting pressure on the coasts with the explosion of the world's population. This explosion is chiefly concentrated in coastal areas where a high proportion of our contemporaries already live, since 40% of the global population lives less than 60 kilometres from the coast, and by the end of this century 80% of humanity will be living on a coastal strip of 100 kilometres...

Finally there is global warming, which is disrupting the natural balance of the seas. It is increasing their acidity in an extremely alarming manner. It is weakening the ecosystems, in particular the most vulnerable. It is modifying migration flows and encouraging the proliferation of invasive species...

Behind this bleak but realistic picture, we need to acknowledge the irresponsibility of human-beings – our own irresponsibility - because it is Humanity alone which is responsible for all this disruption. It alone has acquired such power today that it is now threatening the elements we believed were the most powerful, the most timeless and the most indestructible...

It is virtually the whole of humanity which is responsible for this. It is our entire world civilisation which for decades has imposed this unreasonable relationship on the seas. It has flourished on the predation of marine resources. It prospers today chiefly through its dependence on the sea, on the goods it provides and on the commercial trade which to a large extent takes place on its surface.

More importantly it is the whole of Humanity that needs the seas like never before – seas abounding in life and in good health – in order to face the future.

Because at a time when this entire Planet is affected by our activities, at a time when the population is growing at an extremely rapid rate, at a time when Planet Earth itself does not seem enough to satisfy our appetites, the ocean is seen as a new frontier, a horizon towards which we can turn to create our future.

But only on condition that we protect it, and above all that we invent a future which respects this ocean, its natural balance and its species...

This task is both crucial and immense and is one which needs everyone to get involved and motivated.

This includes politicians of course, and today they are finally showing concern about marine issues and giving them the importance they deserve.

These issues were given special attention at COP 21 in Paris in 2015. One year later, in Marrakech, COP 22 devoted an entire day to them. The IPCC's latest report in turn included a chapter focused on the oceans. An interim report will shortly be dedicated to this issue and the cryosphere, largely on Monaco's initiative.

In 2015 the UN affirmed a Sustainable Development Goal specific to the oceans and major discussions are currently under way regarding the protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions – what is known as BBNJ.

I have been personally involved in all these efforts and I would like to emphasise to what extent they represent significant progress. Only ten or twenty years ago it would have been impossible to mobilise the international community about these issues in such a way as we do today.

Many countries are now adopting specific measures to protect the oceans. A key agreement has just been settled for the preservation of the Ross Sea, around Antarctica; something I have been promoting for many years. Several States with large maritime areas, such as France, the United States and Colombia, recently announced the creation of very large marine protected areas. In the Mediterranean, as in many of the world's fragile seas, we are witnessing consolidation and development of protective measures, in particular for the most vulnerable ecosystems.

These political measures have been approved and developed by society as a whole, which is more aware than ever before of the need to implement action for the seas.

Because however determined they are, States and politicians alone will not be able to resolve all the problems faced by the oceans today.

Faced with issues of such magnitude, the active involvement of everyone is essential, and in particular that of maritime professionals, many of whom are here at this Symposium, and who perhaps more than anyone else are aware of the urgency and know that the mobilisation of as many people as possible is required.

Within this global mobilisation that we see emerging, the role of economic players is a decisive factor. This is not just because of their inventiveness but because of their ability to address the needs of our contemporaries and because above all what is needed is not merely making our seas a sanctuary – but a whole new development paradigm based on a harmonious, responsible and sustainable relationship between humankind and the oceans; one which promotes human progress without jeopardising the future of the Planet, its oceans and of future generations that will be living on their shores.

The shipping industry obviously has a key role to play at the heart of this new relationship between humankind and the sea: this is the very topic which brings us together today.

I will not go into the technical details of issues that you know better than I. However I would like to point out the three-fold approach which in my opinion is necessary when discussing these issues. First of all it is the construction of ships, secondly the use made of them and finally their recycling at the end of their lives.

Contrary to what we tend to believe, the pressure placed by ships on the environment does not begin the day they are launched.

Their structure is often built from iron ore which is extracted (sometimes with detrimental effects on the environment) in one part of the world such as Australia. It is then shipped to the location where it is converted into steel, for example in Brazil. This steel is finally transported to the shipyard, perhaps in Europe, where ships are assembled.

The plastic used for a substantial part of the interior fittings, but also for the hull of pleasure yachts, is derived from petroleum. This is extracted perhaps in Russia or the Middle East and then transported to the place where it is converted into plastic, before also being shipped to the shipyard.

The same applies to all materials: the lead in electric batteries, the rare metals in electronic systems, the leather for seats, etc. There is also the use, in some yachting industries, of precious wood which once again is too often produced unsustainably, an issue in which my Foundation is deeply involved....

Suffice to say that even before sailing its first nautical mile, a boat has already made multiple impacts on the Planet. We need to be aware of these impacts when discussing future marine technologies, because their reduction is crucial for ocean health.

Once the ship is built, other environmental effects appear in relation to its navigation. You are well aware of these: primarily the fuel used for its engines, the various discharges into the sea, as well as more indirect effects on the environment, related to port facilities, sonars which can disturb certain species, and the disruption caused by human presence in some marine ecosystems.

Finally, the third phase to take into consideration is the dismantling of ships at the end of their lives, which we are beginning to understand can have disastrous effects if not carried out in a responsible manner.

These three phases form a whole. They require the same attention, the same efforts by public and international authorities, as well as by private representatives. And today they can all benefit from solutions which are increasingly proving their worth.

For shipbuilding, this means using raw materials produced by an environmentally friendly process. I am thinking for example of timber, for which my Foundation has developed the "Wood Forever" initiative in Monaco, whereby yacht builders commit to using wood harvested from sustainably managed forests based on a strict certification process.

It also involves the implementation, wherever possible, of shortest routes, alone capable of preventing the proliferation of transport, in particular maritime, which inevitably affect the oceans.

For navigational purposes, it is of course a question of promoting alternative energies, for which increasingly efficient solutions are currently being developed. I am thinking naturally of wind energy, but also of solar energy which the expeditions carried out by the vessel Planet Solar have demonstrated could represent a real solution, at least for leisure yachting; both these energies optimise the use of fuel cells which seem to offer a promising solution in terms of fuel, including for merchant ships.

Finally, as far as ship breaking operations are concerned, I believe that clean technologies generally exist and are today widely used. But it is still important that builders keep these aspects in mind, that they incorporate them into their design work and that they understand that these are, even indirectly, responsibilities which are also theirs.

Because the most important thing in all of the above is the implementation of a global and shared system of responsibility.

We are all sea users; whatever our activity, wherever we live, whatever our level of awareness, we all consume goods that at some point have travelled across the oceans. We are all members of the same civilisation, a civilisation that is fundamentally maritime-based, even if we do not always realise it.

A civilisation that therefore needs to finally shoulder its responsibilities, and make the oceans, our knowledge of them, their preservation and their responsible use, a priority. Our future, that of our children and quite simply the future of our Planet, depends on this

That is why I was eager to join you today, to raise this much needed awareness with you. To remind you that solutions do exist and that they can be extremely worthwhile sources of progress, development and growth for your industry.

It is an opportunity to remind you that without these efforts, it is the very future of your activities which will be in jeopardy; because unhealthy and devastated seas will never have the magnificent yachts we can admire at this boat show glide over their waters.

The fact that this Symposium has been organised proves that such awareness is shared. Therefore I want to believe that you will assume the responsibilities that are yours. These are important responsibilities commensurate with the importance of the yachting industry and above all commensurate with the importance of the oceans which cover our Blue Planet.

"Das Meer ist alles"* wrote Jules Verne: now the time has come to do everything in our power, together, to save it!

Thank you.

* The Sea is everything