

Madam President,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure to see you again today, one year after our last meeting in Paris.

Over and above our meeting, this pleasure is down to the satisfaction felt regarding the progress made.

The declaration we signed in Paris last year has indeed borne fruit and I think that we have reason to be satisfied with the IPCC's decision to produce a special report on the oceans and the cryosphere, the work for which will begin in Monaco in a few days' time.

Likewise, the special day devoted to the oceans hosted here two days ago marked an important step in increasing awareness of this issue and its impact on climate change.

Such progress should encourage us to go even further, to take advantage of this favourable environment to advance along the paths we already have explored, and which are essential for sustainable ocean preservation.

Going further means first of all mobilizing as widely as possible.

In addition to the satisfaction of seeing each other again today to discuss, as is frequently the case, an issue which has spurred us all into action for many years, we sometimes have the impression of bringing together the same players when it is a question of the seas.

Of course several major countries which are increasingly taking action to protect the oceans are not present here today. However, I believe we should aim to involve even more people in our discussions, to give them systematically a more global dimension.

It needs to be borne in mind and have attention drawn to constantly: the oceans are a universal cause. Their future is vital for humankind as a whole, and not only for coastal countries.

One of the goals I would therefore like us to set is to continue to bring in, to join us new States, new will. It is a matter of making everyone understand that the ocean issue is not a sectorial one, but is at the core of the climate issue and the majority of environmental matters.

We will suffer the consequences of the damage inflicted on the oceans together and it is together that we can save them.

Likewise, it is vital that we continue to pool various energies, to get civil society, NGOs, economic players, local authorities, governments and multilateral institutions to work together.

One of the challenges of this COP22 is to intensify this movement and I believe that the ocean issue, more than other issues perhaps, needs such synergy, these openings that will result in finding new solutions, mobilizing new energies and implementing more efficient actions.

We have all seen here that the most successful initiatives are those which bring together the most diverse players.

I have seen this myself, in most of the projects I have conducted with my Foundation: it is always from meetings, exchanges and complementarity that the most interesting solutions spring forth, and the most valuable for us.

We all stand to gain from such interaction. We stand to gain support, ideas, power and efficiency.

Going further also means advancing our knowledge, and in order to do so, developing research, in particular with regard to new topics.

The seas, as we are aware, are still largely mysterious, unknown, and unexplored. The work of scientists has periodically revealed dangers that we had not identified or which we had underestimated. But often it is late when these issues reach the political agenda.

In order to address the disruption underway in the marine environment more efficiently, we need to gain a better understanding of it and identify it earlier.

To this end, I believe that one of our priorities should be, in a spirit of dialogue with the scientific community and support for its work, to endeavour to identify the challenges of tomorrow.

This does not mean abandoning those which are currently on the agenda, on the contrary. This means anticipating, listening, in order to act more efficiently before it is too late.

This will of course involve significant and continuous efforts. However these efforts, I believe, are very much worthwhile, in that they will enable us to prevent disasters occurring.

This is the message that I wanted to put forward to you. Although substantial and historic progress has been made over the last year, it is crucial that we take advantage of this momentum to move even further ahead. To bring on board new States. To unite new players. And to explore new issues.

"The sea is everything" wrote Jules Verne: now the time has come to do everything in our power, together, to save it.

Thank you.