

*Lunch on the Oceans*  
*Davos, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to see you here again today around a theme which I hold particularly close to my heart: the OCEANS.

While global marine areas cover 70% of the Earth's surface, and as our food, our ecosystems, or our climate directly depend on our seas, the attention we pay to them is still too rare.

Such indifference has dramatic consequences.

The facts are uncontested when describing the state of our seas which is worsening over the years, mostly due to human activities.

I would like to focus on three main problems here.

The first is humanity's appetite, increased by more and more powerful technologies. An appetite for fish resources of course with many stocks being depleted until they are vanishing from some of our seas where before they were abundant.

An appetite also for mineral resources, in particular hydrocarbons, which we are going to look always more further away in increasingly dangerous conditions.

This is likely to worsen, as we are well aware that human needs are growing, both as far as energy and food are concerned.

With the standard of living increasing everywhere, with a world population which will soon reach nine or ten billion individuals, how could things be otherwise?

To meet these requirements, it is inevitable that over the next few years great pressure will be placed on the oceans, which today are still more or less free from any exploitation. Consequently it is more urgent than ever to protect them.

The second problem is climate change. As the latest IPCC report showed, for the first time devoting a specific chapter to the oceans, climate change has extremely serious consequences on them.

Consequences on vulnerable ecosystems such as the Polar Regions which it helps to weaken. Consequences on biodiversity which it dangerously modifies.

And consequences that are not easily visible, with the phenomenon of ocean acidification, already having an impact on many species, especially shellfish. And not to mention of course the "aggressor" role of the oceans whose level is rising, thus creating a new category of refugees that are known as climate refugees.

The third problem suffered by our oceans is the political and legal vacuum which surrounds them, a vacuum inversely proportional to the issues contained within them.

The main tool available in dealing with all issues related to the seas of the world is the Montego Bay Convention, which has allowed us to make progress since it was drafted in 1982. The definition of the continental shelf and

exclusive economic zones, together with the institution of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, represented major milestones.

Unfortunately, this text is inadequate in a number of areas:

- For instance the question of an extended continental shelf, which is currently at the heart of a great deal of questioning, as it determines the ability of States to appropriate offshore resources;
- More generally, the status of the high seas and the ocean floor is inadequately defined in this Convention.

In addition to this, beyond the text itself, the accumulation of conventions and institutions does not promote the legibility, coherence or effectiveness of international action in this area.

There is therefore an urgent need to take action multilaterally on the oceans, in the wake of the work conducted today at the UN on the Montego Bay Convention with what is known as the BBNJ, namely the establishment of a minimum set of rules to protect biodiversity beyond areas under national jurisdiction.

We need to take matters further, to support and pool all initiatives, such as for example the one conducted by the SDSN in which I am involved, and which has managed to add a sustainable development objective specific to the oceans, one which should be adopted by the United Nations next September.

The principles we need to implement are now known and are supported by a very wide consensus. These were pointed out a year ago in the report established by the Global Ocean Commission, which brings together senior leaders and former world leaders from around the world to focus on these issues, *(and for which I am pleased to salute one of the commissioners, Mr Pascal Lamy)*.

It is a question first of all of stopping overfishing which destroys the ecosystems and gradually empties our seas. This implies a thorough and courageous review of the current subsidies which are manifold, complex and opaque, and thus promote overfishing.

Likewise, it is important to be armed with the resources necessary to combat illegal fishing effectively - in particular in improving coordination between States.

All this must go hand in hand with increased awareness among professionals, who need to adopt sustainable management practices for fish stocks, of which they will be the first beneficiaries.

In this context what happened almost ten years ago with the blue fin tuna and in which, with my Foundation, I was one of the stakeholders, shows that such change is possible!

The second priority we need to address is monitoring and restricting the exploitation of offshore resources, especially fossil resources. I am thinking of particularly fragile areas, such as the Arctic, where global warming and new technologies open the way to disturbing appetites.

Confronted with the major threat of a potential oil spill in the Arctic, but also the uncertainty regarding the effects of such exploitation, we must impose extremely strict guarantees based on solid scientific opinion.

We cannot entrust the future of these regions to the mere goodwill of oil companies, no more can we abandon them to the sole sovereignty of the surrounding States, because we already know the importance of the Arctic and of the Antarctic continent for the entire Planet.

Plus, we are aware of the largely transboundary impact that an environment disaster would have.

Furthermore, I am convinced that the headlong rush for increasingly greater amounts of fossil energies is no longer ineluctable: alternative energies are now becoming more economically competitive and energy efficiency gives rise to significant savings. I will not speculate on the collapse in oil prices, perhaps only due to the current economic climate.

We must also develop marine protected areas, which enable us to exclude some areas from certain economic activities. In promoting sustainable sea management, these marine protected areas have largely proven their value.

They are too few at this time in the light of the tremendous challenges faced by our oceans. That is why I believe it is crucial to accelerate their development, especially in the high seas. We need to do this even faster than what was defined in Aichi in 2010, where a target of 10% was fixed for 2020 - a target which will be extremely difficult to meet.

Finally, ocean conservation also means combating climate change, which will be one of the greatest challenges for 2015.

The Paris Conference in December will be a "last chance" event, for which we all need to take action.

That is why it is essential, as I strive to do with my Foundation, to raise the awareness of as many decision makers as possible, as well as world public opinion that needs to understand that part of their future depends on the sea.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

I would like to say that none of this will be possible without an effort to acquire scientific knowledge, the only workable basis for a very wide consensus. We can only protect the seas and promote their responsible use by exploring and understanding them.

So here again, significant efforts need to be made, hopefully bringing us together. Although the seeds can be found in such exploration for the preservation imposed, the foundations of a new, more harmonious, more solid and more sustainable growth can also be found in scientific research, from whose conclusions I hope we will be able to benefit.

Each and every one of us is responsible for this because the main enemy of the oceans is humankind. If we are the source of the problem, we can also be the solution, provided that we know how to act with lucidity, unity and rapidity.

Faced with substantially more dismal and demanding prospects, did President Franklin Roosevelt not say "Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds"?

I know that we can save the oceans, because we can change our minds!

Thank you.