

Dear Minister,

Mr President,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would like to thank Alexander Tudhope for his warm welcome and his words that really touched me.

Through him, I would like to extend my thanks to our host today, the University of Edinburgh, and its School of GeoSciences.

This extremely prestigious university, with its long and rich history, is particularly dear to my heart. I have already had the pleasure of visiting it on several occasions. Two years ago, I was honored to receive the distinction of Doctor Honoris Causa. Moreover, my Foundation has forged a very productive relationship with this institution.

Therefore, I would once again like to express my gratitude to those in charge for their hospitality.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all of you present today, at this 9th edition of the Monaco Blue Initiative.

As you know, the Monaco Blue Initiative aims to help change our approach to the oceans, by prioritizing specific, collective and operational solutions.

In this respect, the Initiative was created as the result of an observation, a requirement and an aim.

The observation is that of the great complexity of the subjects related to the conservation of our oceans, which combine different levels of action, technical expertise and complementary aims.

We need to act in line with multiple rationales, taking into account sometimes contradictory requirements, reconciling the needs of humanity with those of nature, as well as current crises and our duties to the future. But we need to act quickly.

Because the requirement is to progress rapidly in the face of the dangers that each year are becoming increasingly specific and, above all, increasingly serious. Whilst there is still time, we must do everything we can to avoid irreversible tragedies.

Tragedies that we can already see looming on the horizon, when we observe the deterioration of precious, fragile ecosystems, the spread of plastic pollution, and the daily disappearance of different plant and animal species.

In order to succeed in reversing the cycle of decline, we must adopt a new approach, respectful and based on diminishing our resource use. We must stop taking the Ocean for granted and believing it is permanent, that we can take from it and pour into it without consequences.

Finally, the aim is to bring together skills and means that are all too often dispersed, to encourage dialogue between experts, and to mobilize concerted action.

We must act together. Otherwise, we will not be able to progress in the right direction.

Acting alone, we would run out of ideas. Acting alone, we would run out of means. Acting alone, we would run out of determination. Acting alone, we would above all be less efficient.

We must never forget these multiple demands, this complexity and this complementarity, which are essential in order to make a real difference. We must never forget the reality.

As David Hume, one of Scotland's most distinguished sons, ordered, we must “be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man”.

Indeed, being “a man” means precisely looking at the different aspects of a problem and trying to reconcile them. And that is why we need to work together.

In this respect, today I would like to extend a special welcome to Mr. Peter Thomson, the United Nations Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean. Through his work, he embodies this collective commitment by the nations of the world to the oceans and their importance to humanity.

His appointment to this post shows a new awareness by the international community, which, like him, is equipped with remarkable skills and new means.

In 2015, during COP21 in Paris, the issue of the oceans was for the first time officially included in the negotiating agenda, and it was also referred to in the preamble to the Paris Agreement. In 2016, COP22 devoted a specific day to the issue of the oceans.

That year, the IPCC complied with the request made notably by the Principality of Monaco and my Foundation, to devote an interim report to the oceans and the cryosphere, after including a chapter on the oceans in its latest report. Work on this interim report was launched in Monaco just over a year ago now, and is due to finish in the Principality in autumn 2019.

Also in 2016, the United Nations stated that one of the Sustainable Development Goals was to “Conserve and Sustainably Use Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development”. In June 2017, the UN organized a major international conference, which I participated in, on the implementation of this Goal No. 14.

In parallel, negotiations were launched for the adaptation of the International Law of the Sea, which was designed at a time when environmental and climate issues appeared different from the way they are today. In 2016, a project on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction was thus launched, in which Monaco plays a very active role.

All these changes are essential. They are essential because of the progress they allow. But above all because of the spirit that they demonstrate: a spirit of collective responsibility.

Today, this spirit needs to be extended beyond diplomatic and political circles. It must be shared with economic players. It must be introduced into civil society.

This is why we are here today. This is why, year after year, and after nine years now, the Monaco Blue Initiative aims to encourage dialogue and promote reflection, to identify solutions and assess their efficiency, focusing on the same issues.

The issue of blue growth and its infinite potential, the problems affecting marine protected areas, which are occurring increasingly frequently across the globe, and the development of aquaculture, so essential for our collective future. There is an endless list of subjects that are advancing continuously, and which we therefore need to return to periodically, to refine our analyses and fill in the gaps in our knowledge.

There are so many issues that require specific solutions.

This is an essential requirement and the one we have come together to focus on today.

Thank you!