

Mr Rector,

My dear Jane Lubchenco,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Allow me to say how happy I am that this meeting is being held, on a subject which is absolutely critical and yet too often overlooked.

I would therefore like to thank the organizers and particularly those from the University of Nice – Sophia Antipolis who welcome us here today.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who devote their energies and talents on a daily basis to marine protected areas and to our oceans more widely.

I am delighted to see some familiar faces, and particularly that of Jane Lubchenco, to whom I had the pleasure of awarding my Foundation's prize three years ago, for her contribution to the fight against climate change, and I thank her for these flattering words.

It is important for us to get together, as we are doing today, to discuss the issue of marine protected areas.

Discussing these areas our seas, are critical issues because these environments are the source of life.

When we talk about marine protected areas, we are talking about biodiversity – a biodiversity which is so important and yet so threatened by the unreasonable expansion of human activities.

When we talk about marine protected areas, we are also talking about humans, who exploit the seas and may cause them considerable harm.

We refer to the economy, to our development to the point of irresponsible excess, and to about the prospects of changing this model.

In this sense, we are also talking about politics, about shared management of our common heritage, at the national level and even more so at the international level, particularly when it comes to the high seas.

Marine protected areas are part of the future we will leave to our children, of the world which we will be able to provide for them.

Marine protected areas, refers to science. Science which, alone, now enables us to understand and anticipate the mechanisms at work in the sea, both those which make it vulnerable, and those which have the capacity to save it.

Marine protected areas deals with, our relationship with nature and ways in which we can make this relationship more productive. It is, in essence, talking about philosophy.

This long list explains better than anything else, I think, the many reasons which have for some years prompted me to take action to promote marine protected areas.

Confronted with the tragedy of attacks on biodiversity, confronted with the threat to our increasingly damaged seas, marine protected areas today offer one of the only viable prospects for improving the situation.

I have been able to witness these benefits in the numerous regions of the world where I have had the opportunity to support them, beginning in Monaco with the Larvotto Reserve, which was established forty years ago on the Monegasque coastline, and the Pelagos Sanctuary dedicated to marine mammals, which we set up around fifteen years ago with France and Italy.

Above all, for the last ten years my Foundation has been working hard to promote marine protected areas, and this is something into which I have personally put a great deal of effort. I have done this by participating in a number of international conferences devoted to this subject, particularly at the UN where, as you will be aware, some very important work is currently being done on the issue of the preservation of biodiversity in high seas.

Through my Foundation and the Monaco Government, we have also supported scientific research programs relating to marine protected areas, designed to prove and expand their effectiveness. And, together with the French Government, we have created a trust fund which aims to promote and develop the network of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean.

I am delighted to report that the general meeting of this fund is taking place this very afternoon in Paris, where we are being joined by numerous Mediterranean countries and entities.

Through these various commitments, which have taken me from the coast of Corsica to the Koh Rong archipelago in Cambodia, from Madagascar to Micronesia, and from the Arctic to the Antarctic, I have, each time, noted the extent to which the solutions implemented have enabled the situation to evolve.

By involving local populations, without whom nothing can be done, by offering them new resources, primarily associated with ecotourism, and by promoting the revival of sustainable fishing in bordering areas as a long-term aim, marine protected areas multiply the benefits, for the sea and for people, every time.

In this way, they do more than conserve several square kilometers: they sketch out a new development model, a model which, finally, reconciles the needs of human progress and those of nature conservation.

It is now essential that we strengthen, develop and expand this model. Despite the results they have brought, the successes I have mentioned remain too limited in nature.

We know that marine areas currently under protected status represent much too small a proportion of our seas to have a global impact. Despite the decisions taken in Nagoya in 2010, we will find it very difficult to achieve the objective of protecting 10% of our seas as early as 2020. And yet, in the long term, the figure we need to see is not 10%, but 20% at the very least, if we genuinely wish to stop the spiral of destruction!

This is why it is important to make a significant collective effort in this direction, as you are inviting us to do today. This is why countries such as France must do everything in their power to increase the number of protected areas within their maritime domain, the second most important on the planet, and to equip them with effective monitoring mechanisms. Above all, this is why this global effort must be based on rigorous scientific expertise.

We are aware of the extent to which marine protected areas can refer to very different realities which are difficult to evaluate. And of course we also know how many gaps remain in our knowledge of the seas.

The only way that we can truly move forward and convince those who are most reluctant is therefore to base our arguments on objective and undisputable expertise.

In this regard, your initiative today seems to me to be the most appropriate way of promoting this approach to managing our seas sensibly and thereby reconciling man with his environment and the so often neglected seas on a sustainable basis.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dear friends, I cannot resist the temptation to conclude my speech by reminding you of the Titan, Oceanus, a mythological figure who was represented as an enormous river. He surrounded the Earth and the human world, also connecting it to the rest of the universe...

Through a strange twist of history, I have the impression today that the ocean once more outlines the limits to the development of our world, and that it will, at the same time, enable us to come up with new models which will shape the world of tomorrow: a more responsible and sustainable world, as demonstrated by marine protected areas.

I hope, therefore, that your work will allow us to make progress in this direction, and to make our peace with Oceanus.

Thank you.