

***Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution:
results and challenges
Milan, 6 March 2012***

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Innanzitutto vorrei esprimervi il grande piacere che ho di essere qui tra voi, per questo incontro che mi rallegra sinceramente.

This is indeed an opportunity to meet eminent personalities, scientists and academics, to whom I would like to extend my warmest greetings, as it is always important for me to be able to exchange. I would also like to salute Professor Fontanesi, rector of the University of Bicocca as this event could not have taken place without his implication.

This meeting is also an opportunity to reassert the profound solidarity, which unites Italy and the Principality of Monaco in many areas among which the environmental protection. Our two countries, so close in their history, linked by their geography, mutually supportive in the face of the challenges of the future, must progress together more than ever, in particular to address the problems they share, like the one that brings us together here.

The threats weighing on the Mediterranean Sea are far too serious and critical for isolated action to be considered. Together with all Mediterranean countries, especially our neighbours in the European Union, we must mobilise our forces with determination in an orderly consistent way.

This is the only way to act effectively to prevent the disasters that would necessarily occur as a result of our negligence or inaction.

What are these disasters? They are, of course, the visible, even spectacular, disasters that punctuate the daily news. A few weeks ago, the images of the wreck of the Costa Concordia cruise ship reminded us all of the constant threats on the Mediterranean Sea.

But there are other hazards, too. Though they are obviously not as visible, but no less of a menace to this endangered sea.

Yes, Ladies and gentlemen, just as my father Prince Rainier III had warned nearly a half-century ago along with Captain Cousteau, the sea we share is still in peril today.

First, it is endangered by those of us who live on its shores without sufficiently respecting this heritage to which we owe so much!

Today, nearly five hundred million people live in this limited area, including one hundred and fifty million on the coast itself, to which we must add nearly three hundred million tourists every year. This increasingly concentrated and urbanised population is the prime cause of the threats weighing on the region.

Indeed, the millions of men, women and children occupying these shores obviously need to eat, live, exchange and, to those ends, produce, trade and consume. And these essential activities are today often accomplished unreasonably, disregarding all prospects of sustainability.

The constant growth in maritime traffic with larger ships increases the risks, especially those of hydrocarbon pollution, not to mention the intentional discharge we still observe. With the erosion of halieutic resources, fishing is concentrated in the areas with the richest biotopes. Intensive trawling destroys the sea floors, which are often spawning zones. An emblematic and oh so dramatic example: overfishing of tuna is disrupting the entire food chain.

And the development of aquaculture is no more reassuring, since it, too, is a potential source of many pollutions and the transmission of epizooties.

Another threat that is emerging for the future is the revival of activity in the area limited to exploration - but of course with prospects of subsequent exploitation - of fossil fuels that could exist along our shores. The environmental hazards inherent in such activities, like those linked inevitably to the resulting devaluing of our regions' tourist capital, should lead to examining such threats more rigorously and, in my personal opinion, to exclude them, especially since the potential for renewable energy available in our regions is considerable and very much underexploited.

I believe very strongly in solar energy, so abundant especially in the Southern Mediterranean, and that could provide powerful leverage for sustainable development tomorrow. In this sense, I find the Desertec concept very interesting: by 2050, it could provide Europe with 15% of its energy solely on the basis of sunshine in the desert reaches south of the Mediterranean. Such a concept opens vast prospects for access to clean inexhaustible energy, as well as development.

This sea, with all its wealth and beauty, home to 8% of marine species in just 0.8% of the surface and 0.3% of the volume of the ocean's waters on the globe, is greatly weakened today.

This observation is reinforced because of the menacing planetary context. Global warming, decreased rainfall, acidification of the seas with a progression in the Mediterranean comparable to that of the oceans, and the proliferation of invasive species, are all additional factors destabilising these ecosystems.

Ladies and gentlemen, such are the very concrete perils jeopardising the future of the sea we share and against which we must find answers, both realistic and effective.

These hazards do not all result from pollution. But, if we must seriously examine the true nature of pollution and possible remedies, how can we not see that it is only one aspect among so many others of the fragility of our Planet?

How can we ignore the fact that it only compounds the dire situation of this sea which such predatory activity has made "the martyr sea," according to the UN formula?

Defending the environment is meaningless if it is not undertaken for the sake of humankind, for the long-term survival of populations, the development and progress of peoples to preserve and enhance the lives of all.

Such is the paradox inherent in any reflection on the protection of our Planet: it is for the sake of people that we must fight and we must struggle against certain human tendencies, against this human trend that entails using available resources without any restriction whatsoever, going against the reflex that involves thinking in terms of immediate gains rather than the long term.

To resolve this contradiction, we have no other choice than to conceive another mode of development, development that satisfies both the Planet's requirements and its inhabitants' aspirations. These are legitimate aspirations, especially for those peoples who struggle for access to essential goods: water, hygiene, health and food. They are concentrated for the most part on the southern shore and request accelerated development for their regions.

This is their hope and legitimate dream. The more we allow the gap between the two shores to widen, the worse the problems will become, including from a strictly environmental standpoint since ecological threats are always more serious in a troubled economic context.

We can see this today, with the financial crisis that has shaken Europe, affected populations and led too often to neglecting the obligation of environmental preservation.

There has already emerged an essential awareness on these issues further progress is accomplished year after year with new ideas towards another development model.

I would like to emphasise the importance of the efforts undertaken within European institutions where the gradual construction of convergent binding environmental legislation has achieved major advances. This awareness was necessary and I believe it is now on the right track.

I can only hope that from now on, we will see the effects extended to other environmental issues, fishing in particular, for which Europe has an indispensable regulatory role to play.

This is particular true in that different countries concerned are also devising interesting prospects. The multiplication of initiatives, especially on a regional level, will enable us to progress sustainably.

To mention an example I know well: the RAMOGE agreement between France, Italy and Monaco has made it possible for over thirty years to conduct major scientific, technical, legal and administrative cooperation for better integrated management of the coast and protection against pollution.

In the wake of RAMOGE, the RAMOGEPOL Plan on accidental pollution is another key tool for addressing such major hazards that are unfortunately recurrent.

I would like to stop a moment on these initiatives, based on a philosophy that I believe to be essential: the delimitation of priority perimeters, exclusive economic zones and marine protected areas, to be able to preserve certain essential sectors against all risk of direct pollution.

Born from the fertile cooperation between France, Italy and the Principality of Monaco, the Pelagos agreement offers an example that we should develop with great ambition and energy and for which it is my ardent wish that the political will for action not be thwarted by administrative inflexibility or vain institutional debates.

On the base of such fruitful partnerships with private players and local people, other protected marine areas having proven their effectiveness. In many parts of the Mediterranean, as in other seas on the Planet, they have achieved genuine ecological, economic, scientific and educational success.

Indeed, if it is essential for all action to be taken in the interest of peoples, we must also work with these populations by convincing them and associating them with these actions. It is not a matter of opposing their development. It is simply one of supervising and orienting it to make it compatible with environmental constraints. By working in partnership with populations, we can preserve the part of their heritage we know to be essential, for their future as for that of all of us.

This is the meaning of the actions conducted by the Foundation I created in 2006 and which has led today to many projects, in the Mediterranean in particular, around three major themes: preserving biodiversity, fighting climate change and conserving water resources. In every case, we work in a noble spirit of partnership in which peoples are implicated so they can understand that it is for them and with them that we will preserve our Mediterranean Sea's unique heritage several millennia old. This is a guarantee of both respect and efficacy.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dear friends,

The issue here is to protect our sea, our region from the damage caused by pollution. We will be able to do so only in a spirit of openness and partnership with those living here.

This is an essential principle, but it is also my conviction as a player who has been active in the area of the environment for many years.

Against pollution, we must have the support of Mediterranean populations. The Mediterranean Sea is their source of life, the cradle of their dreams and the garden of their subsistence. When this source is polluted, their very survival is at stake. When there is a threat to the survival of peoples around this sea we share, our entire civilisation is shaken. Therein lies the profound power of this sea, where all of us originated and which continues to embody an ideal as much as our hope, that of making us aware of the strengths and weaknesses of a civilisation born from this sea and that cannot let it die.

Those millennia-old landscapes that are so powerful, so intimately linked to our culture, concentrate our collective destiny. A summary all the more striking that we have the capacity of writing it ourselves.

In the words of Albert Camus in *Amour de vivre*, "never perhaps has a country, if not the Mediterranean Sea, carried me both so far yet so close to myself."

Thank you.