

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Today's discussion offers proof that the issue of marine protected areas goes beyond the exploitation of resources and the legal or financial means which must be engaged to preserve them.

The challenge with regard to marine protected areas involves finding a different way for humans to coexist with the natural world on which they depend.

Like all of those which have gone before it, our civilization is essentially a maritime one. And yet so far, the progress of technology has only made our seas more vulnerable. We face the risk that in the future, they will be devoid of all life if we do not change our approach. A planet which will soon be home to nine or even ten billion people, who need to feed themselves and have a thirst for progress, will require an increasing amount of resources and more and more raw materials.

With this in mind, we must avoid the two pitfalls of either protecting the sea from all human activity, or satisfying human needs at the expense of the seas.

This is precisely what marine protected areas allow us to do, revitalizing the seas while promoting the maritime economy, whether fishing or tourism. This is the approach that we must persuade our contemporaries is the right one.

In my view, the first step is to release the funding, in the absence of which nothing is possible. Marine protected areas play a part in blue growth, which we know can be financially effective and is full of promise. We therefore need to succeed in attracting new sources of funding, which must take a longer term approach than that to which finance is usually accustomed.

Today, marine protected areas represent the only long-term, universally viable, ecologically responsible and financially appropriate solution. This is why we need to develop them, and quickly – before it is too late.

We need to find the means to go far beyond the objective of 10% coverage set in Aichi, even though this objective itself, as things currently stand, seems difficult to achieve. We therefore need a change of scale.

This is the purpose of the Mediterranean Trust Fund initiative launched by my Foundation together with the governments of France, Tunisia and Monaco a little over a year ago: to generate new resources to finance the development and maintenance of marine protected areas.

The success of this initiative should, I think, encourage others to set up and get involved in similar mechanisms.

There is also a need to establish a better legal framework for marine protected areas, by seeking to make standards more uniform – they currently vary widely, reducing their clarity and effectiveness.

Promoting the development of marine protected areas on the high seas and in particularly sensitive regions or areas of known ecological significance is another key task.

I am thinking, of course, of the polar regions, where I am campaigning for the creation of an economic exclusion zone in the high seas north of the Arctic Circle, as well as for the protection of the Ross Sea in the Antarctic.

The work currently being carried out on BBNJ in the UN should contribute to this.

Finally, I believe that we must also focus on the specific realities of existing marine protected areas, and on the difficulties they are facing.

It includes their size – they are currently too fragmented to have an impact at the global level – their economic development, and monitoring.

Faced with all these challenges, we must, finally, promote a network approach. This is an essential condition for a global strategy, the only guarantee that we will have an ecological impact on a major scale. And, above all, the only guarantee, that we can forge a new relationship with the sea.

Thank you.