

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

As we are all aware, in two months, will take place in Paris, COP 21 a major climate conference which promises to be decisive. All of the nations on Earth will be represented, along with the majority of the major multilateral organizations, NGOs and key industrial groups.

It is crucial that the ocean seas must not be left absent from this gathering.

The situation of ecosystems threatened by climate change must be made clear in Paris. We have to discuss about the species made vulnerable by ocean acidification and demand justice for the seas which are so vital to us all.

Today offers a particularly opportune moment to reflect on these issues. It is essential that we do this with representatives from a large number of countries, for it is by working together that we will preserve the seas, which represent our shared wealth, and protect our common future.

In order to achieve this goal, we need to adapt our actions to deal with issues which go far beyond those that we usually face.

Due to their expanse – which defies borders and any normal sense of scale – as well as their temporality, the oceans require a fundamental change in our ways of doing things, but also in our ways of thinking.

~~This is what I would like to talk about here today.~~

Think global, think sustainable and think collective: these are the three imperatives that should guide our actions. These requirements may seem natural, but nevertheless, I think that we still often have difficulty in adhering to them.

Protecting the oceans means first of all thinking globally and protecting the entire planet, of which the oceans make up two thirds.

It means reducing pollution, mainly telluric, which is causing increasingly serious damage to the oceans. I am thinking in particular of the plastic pollution which was discussed this morning.

But I am also thinking of the many other problems that we are aware of: the hydrocarbons, fertilizers, chemical products and wastewater which are spilled or discharged into seas around the world in quantities totaling millions of liters every year.

We are not entirely without the means to change this situation. In a large part, it is a question for national policies, which we should encourage and, above all, finance, particularly in the case of developing countries. This is a matter of policies, political will.

Protecting the planet also means, perhaps more than anything else, limiting climate change.

This morning we discussed acidification, and I will not return to this subject now. But we are also aware of the other consequences that global warming has for our oceans: the disruption of fragile ecosystems, the migration of species and, above all, melting ice and the resulting rise in sea levels. These are all issues which have a profound impact on the balance and life of our oceans. They justify a relentless campaign to achieve a binding agreement at COP21.

Protecting the oceans, I believe, also requires us to learn to think sustainably.

For while humans are currently the main threat to the oceans, this is due to our habit of considering natural resources as limitless reserves, free from any kind of control. We cannot preserve the oceans unless we halt this headlong rush.

It does not implicate that we must give up extracting from the oceans the riches which humanity increasingly needs, on the contrary. As the world's population rises, we will have to find more resources. But this cannot work unless we exploit these resources in a sustainable manner, without endangering their long-term future.

In terms of energy, this means giving up the exploitation of hydrocarbons where it is too dangerous, particularly in the polar regions and in fragile ecosystems.

It also means developing renewable energy sources. Here, the oceans offer infinite possibilities.

I will not dwell at length on the topic of fishing, which will be discussed in more detail tomorrow. But we know that it is critical to curb overfishing and instead promote responsible practices, which are already well understood.

Monaco, which has for a number of years put its energies into preserving Mediterranean bluefin tuna, has, I think, proved that it is possible to find solutions that meet the needs of both the fishing industry and the environment.

Introducing a more sustainable approach to maritime resources also means better regulation of aquaculture.

This is one of the fastest growing sectors of the food industry, but it poses grave threats, particularly to biodiversity. All the more so since it often involves catching a significant proportion of particular species, used to feed the farmed fish, to the detriment of coastal populations.

It is up to us, therefore – and this is most often the job of governments – to establish responsible principles in this area, vital if we are to feed a global population which will soon reach nine or ten billion people.

I will now move on to the third imperative: thinking collectively.

Here – and this is in part the aim of tomorrow's session on governance – it is about putting in place greater cooperation, between States as well as between those who have a stake in the oceans. In this regard, there are three areas which require ~~merit~~ attention.

The first is the battle against illegal fishing. It is possible and necessary to apply stricter control regulations. This is dependent on national policies, cooperation between states and multilateral agreements.

The second area is the development of an arsenal of legal measures which are more appropriate to maritime challenges, issues to be discussed tomorrow. As we know, the Montego Bay Convention is now inadequate in ~~with~~ regard to many of these points.

This is why we need to actively support the initiatives currently underway and to integrate them, as was done with the sustainable development goal specific to the oceans which was adopted by the United Nations two weeks ago.

Thirdly, we need to increase the number of preservation areas covering seas and their ecosystems, in particular marine protected areas which we talked about just a little while ago. We must get close to the unfortunately still very modest target set in Nagoya in 2010, which seeks to establish marine protected areas over 10% of coastal and marine regions.

Marine protected areas both save our oceans and promote the activities of all those who depend on them: the billions of our fellow citizens who still live in coastal areas in ever-increasing numbers. They need to understand that their future will be secured through cooperation and preservation of the seas.

Our task is to guide and support them through this profound transformation, which the entire world needs in order to live more sustainably. In this respect, saving the oceans will open up a path which all of us must learn to follow for now and for their future.

As the great poet Pablo Neruda wrote, "I need the sea because it teaches me" ("Necesito del mar porque me enseña"). ~~Hope~~ May we will all listen to this great thickest teacher.

Thank you.