

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would just say how delighted I am to have the opportunity to discuss the issue of the oceans with you today. It is a major issue for all of us, and I would like to thank the organisers of the World Economic Forum for making this meeting possible.

As you know, the seas cover over 70% of the Earth's surface. They play a decisive role in its climate and weather balance. They produce 50% of our oxygen and absorb 25% of our CO2 emissions. And the biodiversity they contain is essential for life on Earth and for our food.

Almost half of the world's population lives in coastal areas. Over 80% of world trade is carried by sea. And, in the future, most of our energy, food and raw materials may come from the sea.

However, today these seas are threatened. Global warming is disrupting our planet's ecosystems. CO2 emissions lead to a growing acidification, which makes many species more vulnerable, pollution threatens biodiversity, plastics pollute the entire food chain, and overfishing destroys species. Due to advances in technology, the exploitation of new resources is causing the pressure on the marine environment to increase continuously.

This is the situation and these are the reasons why there is an urgent need to reconcile humanity with the seas and to take action.

This requires everyone to be mobilised.

Naturally, States have a greater responsibility. They must do more to preserve the seas they are responsible for and take more effective action to avert the threats they face, notably in terms of overexploitation and pollution. They also must also promote the emergence of a blue, sustainable economy.

Faced with this kind of challenge, States cannot do everything on their own. Civil societies must also take on their responsibilities. NGOs must step up their efforts, as we do with my Foundation.

Businesses, above all, should harness their resources and their capacity for innovation to support an economy capable of generating growth and profits without impoverishing the seas.

In order to be deployed, all these initiatives require global vision and authority. No authority is more legitimate or more universal than that of the United Nations.

This is the reason why the commitments that have been made, notably within the context of the Sustainable Development Goal 14, are essential.

I am also thinking about a few more major issues that my government and my Foundation are particularly involved in: the issue of the high seas, on which progress is being made. It is a great satisfaction because, more than ever before, there is a need for rules capable of preserving the biodiversity of these vast expanses of water, situated beyond national jurisdiction, which cover half of the Earth's surface and are now vulnerable.

I am also thinking about the development of marine protected areas and that the commitment made to protect over 10% of the globe's marine areas by 2020 will unfortunately not be concretely achieved, when we also know that the scientific community consider this figure to be insufficient.

This is why the appointment of a United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean has brought great hope. I am pleased that Peter Thomson agreed to be based at the Maison des Océans in Paris, an institution created by my great-great-grandfather, which has played a major role in helping to increase our knowledge and preservation of the seas for over 100 years now.

I am happy that we can contribute to its actions, which, supported by the legitimacy of the United Nations and by the mobilisation of all our efforts, can help bring about change.

It is something we all need, and it is essential that we can discuss this subject as we are doing today, in order to take specific, coordinated action.

Thank you very much.