

*"Our Ocean" U.S. Department of State Conference  
Washington, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014  
Address of H.S.H. the Prince*

Mr Secretary of State,  
Excellences, Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

What planet will we be passing on to our children? What conditions will we be leaving them to live, develop and flourish under? What dreams will they still have the right to nurture ?

These are the key questions underlying the issues that bring us together today that we need to answer as the oceans cover over seventy percent of the Earth's surface and a large part of our existence is dependent on their future.

I would therefore like to express my sincerest thanks to You Mr Secretary of State for organizing this summit on the oceans. I am delighted to be able to speak here about a topic which I hold particularly close to my heart, one which motivates my commitment every day and which shapes a significant part of all of our future.

I am delighted to do so in this country which is so dear to me and where, as you know, I have many ties, due to both the history of the Principality of Monaco and to that of my mother Princess Grace.

Preserving the environment, especially the marine environment, is no longer a matter of concern restricted to a few activists. It is now one of the key issues of the 21st century, not only from an economic point of view, but also with regard to health and social strategic aspects. As such, it deserves all our attention, all our energy and all our efforts.

We all now know the importance of the oceans here, nor the threats facing them. We are aware of the extent of the pollution contaminating even the remotest ecosystems on this Earth. We spoke this morning of the absurdities of overfishing, which is gradually emptying our seas of all life and depriving the very people who overexploit them of jobs and resources. And we know the dangers of increasing acidification which affects the ocean environment.

Instead I would like to talk to you about potential solutions which are already emerging

We remained powerless for a long time when confronted with the threats menacing the environment, because we were ignorant. We were not aware of the harm we were inflicting on our seas; we did not imagine that such vast expanses, unknown and foreboding could also be so vulnerable.

Today we do know and it is not yet too late. We are aware of the studies conducted by the world's top experts that are beyond reproach. Others will be unveiled in just a few days - I am thinking of the Global Ocean Commission's report. We have also read the IPCC's latest report, and realize its legitimacy and importance.

This report, which, for the first time, devotes a specific chapter to the oceans, states loudly and clearly that climate change is already a reality that is gathering pace and could increase even more significantly, to reach the critical threshold of 2°C within a few decades.

It points out that "the probability of severe, widespread and irreversible impacts increases with the intensification of global warming". However, it also says that it is still possible to combat this warming and to mitigate it by means of pertinent sustainable strategies and the development of a low carbon-economy.

Thanks to all these experts, some of whom are with us today, we are now aware and able to take action. This is our chance and our duty. However this compels and obliges us to fight those insidious enemies - indifference, scepticism and resignation.

To do this, our duty is to alert, convince and prove that all is not lost. It is to generate lucidity, courage, determination and the resources that have too often been lacking. Above all, it is to invent solutions, propose them and to try to apply them.

Because as our discussions this morning proved, such solutions do exist.

First of all, marine pollution.

We know that a large proportion of this pollution is from land-based sources and that it is possible to combat it directly.

The implementation of water treatment systems is a necessity here in all respects. For reasons of ecology of course, but also for health, and even development.

With the growing water scarcity situation experienced by the planet, and which risks becoming a problem over the next few decades due to constant population growth, this issue need to be approached with the utmost seriousness, at a local level : water basins.

It is in fact at this scale that innovative solutions for integrated management can be implemented which address both the population's needs and the reality of the resources available.

As for maritime pollution, its prevention and possible sanctions against it must be developed more effectively, especially in international waters. Of course, the question of implementation methods needs to be raised. But this does not tackle the fundamental issue: political will entailing substantial work on the high seas, which alone represents close to two thirds of maritime areas, and the implementation of tools which by necessity must be restrictive.

This work is currently under way at the United Nations, more than thirty years after the Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted in Montego Bay. I can only hope that it is successful and that it will unite us all, including the United States of America.

In the same way, I can only hope that the United Nations affirms a sustainable development goal specifically dedicated to the oceans. Such an initiative can but increase awareness of the ocean situation and help us to find the resources we so badly need.

Faced with the issue of overfishing, solutions also exist, as we saw this morning. They also involve the updating of international standards and more effective control mechanisms. However, whilst awaiting such progress, action is already possible, whether it be through specific measures concerning certain species, or through the establishment of special protection areas.

Monaco has moved forward decisively on these two solutions, at its own level but with a certain amount of success.

There was the case with the bluefin tuna, an emblematic species of the Mediterranean, which was critically endangered a few years ago. Now on the Road to Recovery.

This action has thus proved that determination can bring about change, even in a complex institutional framework.

To combat overfishing and allow our oceans to regenerate, we also need to focus on the development and extension of marine protected areas. These protected areas are in fact a means to restore stocks and thus promote a sustainable local fishing economy.

I know that many marine protected areas have been created in US territorial waters proving their ability to combine economic and ecological imperatives.

We can also see this in Monaco, where we have implemented various marine protection agreements in Mediterranean waters. The Pelagos Sanctuary, set up with France and Italy, is an important conservation area for marine mammals and marine biodiversity in general.

In many Mediterranean regions, as well as in almost all the seas of the world, other marine protected areas have met with real success, from an ecological, economic, scientific, social and educational point of view.

It is now time to give them the proper resources - legal of course, but also financial : this is what my Foundation is striving to do with the creation of a trust fund aimed to support Marine protected areas and reach the Aichi targets, I personally consider as being a minimum, adopted by the international community four years ago .

And it is time to make this a true political issue, which will involve the development of a global network of marine protected areas, especially those located on the high seas and in certain areas of the Arctic and Antarctic, I am thinking here about the Ross sea .This would provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen resources, share good practice and optimize solutions.

In the same way, we must and can join forces to combat deep sea trawling: a devastating practice that destroys whole ecosystems for the sake of a profitability that is completely hypothetical. If we truly want to protect underwater life in all its wealth and diversity, it is essential that bold measures be taken swiftly.

Finally, as far as ocean acidification is concerned, I believe that the efforts to be made fall into two categories.

There are global efforts against anthropic carbon emissions, the main cause of such acidification and which I spoke about a few moments ago. But there are also more targeted efforts to be made against this specific consequence of human activities, of which we still have only a limited knowledge.

That is why it is essential first and foremost to support scientific initiatives that will enable us to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon and to come up with solutions to mitigate or curb it.

In this respect, I am delighted that the Principality of Monaco is fully committed to supporting research on this topic, from the Monaco Declaration in 2009, to the accommodation of the International Coordination Centre, supported by your State Department and housed within the International Atomic Energy Agency's marine environment laboratory, not forgetting the meetings hosted in the Principality where scientists and economists share their views on this issue.

It is a huge task, but it is a task for which we are not powerless. Despite the seriousness of the situation, many encouraging elements are to be noted today, first and foremost the mobilization which is emerging all around the world on environmental issues which is hugely encouraging and to which our meeting today bears witness in its own way.

All around us, millions of our fellow human beings have made these issues a key concern and have imposed it on even the most reticent of their governments leaders.

I do not believe that such a rapid change in mentality has ever been observed occurring so quickly in the course of history. It is now up to us to convert such strength into action.

If we succeed, we will have accomplished an exceptional task, as few generations before us were able to do. On the other hand, if we fail, then our future will be directly under threat.

That is why we need to mobilize our contemporaries, awaken their determination and inventiveness, in order to join with them to find every possible way of saving (helping – improve the states of) our oceans.

The young, in particular, but also all the forces of our society, need to unite around this objective common to the whole of humankind. Governments and NGOs, administrations and civil society, corporations and researchers, countries in the North and South alike: it is by joining forces that we will be able to make change effective.

As the great American zoologist and pioneer in ecology Rachel Carson wrote in the introduction to her magnificent book *The Sea Around Us*, "It is a curious situation that the sea, from which life first arose, should now be threatened by the activities of one form of that life.

But the sea, though changed in a sinister way, will continue to exist: the threat is rather to life itself."

Rachel Carson wrote this with good reason: the sea, the oceans and waters will certainly continue to exist, even without life. But it is life that is at stake here. The life of all of us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

For thousands of years, we were able to build our history ignoring what was happening in neighbouring countries, on the other continents - and even more on the ocean floor.

And for thousands of years, we were able to increase our wealth with no concern for the animal or plant species with which we co-existed.

Those days are now past.

Today, we need to learn, to think beyond ourselves, for others and with others, those who live here and those who live elsewhere, those who live today and those who will live tomorrow.

I want to believe that we will be able to overcome these challenges and to help bring on solutions for a brighter future for our oceans.

Thank you.