

Mr European Commissioner,

Dear Karmenu Vella,

Mr Executive Director of UNEP, Dear Mr Erik Solheim,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear friends,

I am delighted to be able to take part with you in the launch of this campaign to combat marine litter and particularly plastic pollution.

I am particularly pleased to be doing so in your presence, Commissioner Vella. This is a reflection both of your own personal commitment - you were here a few months ago for the Monaco Ocean Week - and that of the European Commission.

I am also pleased that this crucial collective approach, whose principles and goals you have just summarized, has come about. This approach addresses an issue of major concern to me, to the Principality of Monaco, and to everyone involved in the preservation of our seas.

Plastics are a major threat. Not only for animal species that ingest them directly, but also for the food chain of which they are a part, and consequently for all marine ecosystems and, by extension, for human health.

We should bear in mind that scientists estimate that micro-plastics resulting from the degradation of plastic waste cause the death of over a million sea birds and one hundred thousand marine mammals every year.

This is a tragedy on a global scale which will take us decades to bring under control, and with which we must engage actively and without delay.

Since 2016, in Monaco, single-use plastic shopping bags have been banned, and likewise all plastic parts used for the packaging of goods since 1st January this year.

On 1st January 2020 all plastic disposable utensils will be banned, and we are also considering banning plastic bottles.

In 2015 my Foundation, with others stakeholders concerned by plastic pollution at sea, launched the "Beyond Plastic Med" Task Force, or BeMed. Through its support, this Task Force has facilitated the emergence of local projects to fight plastic pollution.

Created by civil societies in the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, these projects, which I had the opportunity to award during the Monaco Ocean Week, are another vehicle for widespread mobilization on a subject that concerns us all, and need the participation of each of us.

This is why it is essential to utilize awareness-raising efforts on such a major issue, like the initiative bringing us together today. This campaign, through the mobilization of the 72 aquaria, and in particular thanks to the action of the aquarium of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, will make its voice heard far and wide, within Europe and beyond.

Your commitment is essential. That is the reason why I wanted to let you know my support, and that of all those who are concerned about the future of our seas.

Thank you.