

THE MEDITERRANEAN: A SYMBOL OF THE WOUNDS AND THE HOPES OF OUR EARTH

The Mediterranean has always been at the heart of major upheavals of history because of its geographical position at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia. At the present time, it epitomizes most of the dangers affecting our planet. In the Mediterranean, every landscape reminds us of the legacy for which we act as guardians. I believe that none of us can ignore this compelling duty that makes us a mere bridge between the generations that have come before us on the shores of this sea and those that will follow us tomorrow. Today, the environmental future of the Mediterranean is threatened by global warming, the alarming erosion of biodiversity, and the reduction of freshwater resources in the region. These phenomena have not yet reached an irreversible stage – therefore effective action can and must be displayed now.

Prince Albert II*



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The Mediterranean has historically been at the heart of major upheavals because of its geographical position, at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia. This strategic location imbues the Mediterranean with a symbolic role as the center of gravity of the main issues and the greatest challenges faced by the civilizations living on its shores.



It was in the middle of the Mediterranean that Ulysses travelled through the mythology that would serve as a foundation for many cultures. It was on its waters that the Phoenicians invented trade and originated a form of globalization. It was its shores that gave birth to the great religions that would shape the world. It was also this sea that marked the ambitions of great empires – Roman, Ottoman, Spanish, British and Russian. It

was the stage for many great battles during the two World Wars of the 20th century.

Even today, our sea alone epitomizes most of the dangers affecting our planet. Economic, social, cultural and religious tensions, but also population, urbanization and even migration issues. But most importantly, I believe, it highlights the limits of the economic development model of our societies.

With eight percent of the planet's marine species across less than one percent of its surface area and one half percent of the volume of its oceans, with seven percent of the world's population sharing three percent of its freshwater resources, and particularly with 500 million inhabitants concentrated around this limited space, including 150 million on its coastline alone, to which almost 300 million tourists each year should be added, the Mediterranean presents a concentrated form of the challenges our planet faces.

Before discussing these dangers and their solutions, I would like to add that the Mediterranean also derives its reputation from the beauty of its landscapes, the softness of its light and the poetry of its waters. I am fortunate to live on the shores of this sea, in a country where one is never farther than a few hundred meters away: for me, everything stems from this starting point - it is a principle of my life as well as of my commitment: the continuously renewed beauty of a region, where, as Albert Camus wrote "the gods speak in the sun and the scent of *absinthe* leaves, in the

silver armor of the sea, in the raw blue sky, the flower covered ruins, and the great bubbles of light among the heaps of stone.”¹

Like everywhere on our earth, environmental awareness in the Mediterranean is fueled by the instinctive desire to protect these magnificent views and the sense of a compelling duty to act for a cause that concerns the whole of humanity.

The environmental future of the Mediterranean is today constructed around the key issues of global warming, the alarming erosion of biodiversity, and the reduction of freshwater resources in the region. These three subjects guide my environmental action not only as a country leader but also through my Foundation.

As is specifically the case for the Mediterranean, across the five continents climate change, biodiversity, and water issues are the pillars of global action for the environment.

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Of these three planetary threats, global warming is currently the best known and at the same time, the easiest to comprehend, in terms of both its causes and the means to solve it.

With the exception of a few diehards, nobody now questions the anthropogenic nature of widespread global warming that has been observed on Earth for the last several decades. This is primarily due to the intensive use of fossil fuels that, for two centuries has grown at the same pace as the progress of industry, technology and transport, but also in line with that of practices such as deforestation. Global warming has serious consequences, particularly for the Mediterranean region.

Direct repercussions include rising sea levels due to melting polar ice, changes in rainfall patterns resulting in droughts and floods, an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and even disruptions in the ecological balances of entire regions, affecting fauna and flora.

¹ Albert Camus, “Noces à Tipasa”, *Les Noces*, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1959), p.13.

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Consequences that are no less important, such as population movements increasing the pressure on already fragile areas and with limited resources, must be added to these direct phenomena. It is also important to factor in the changes in ocean currents and the severe ocean acidification. These issues were highlighted in 2009 with the Declaration of Monaco, a call by 150 scientists of 26 nationalities to alert the world of a danger which today plagues the world's oceans and affects the flora and fauna.

In the Mediterranean, all these phenomena combine with a multiplying effect related to the characteristics of an inland sea - a longer regeneration time for resources, fragile ecosystems, and ever-increasing anthropogenic pressure.

In the Mediterranean, these effects on the natural environment are compounded by serious geopolitical consequences due to impoverishment and weakening of the region's most exposed areas, particularly on the southern coastline, which is both more intensely populated and more poorly equipped in terms of infrastructure. The resulting imbalance can only lead to rising tensions, particularly in terms of competition for resources and pressure from migration.

The Mediterranean example demonstrates the major threat posed to Earth by global warming. The potential increase in temperature of almost 7 degrees celcius by 2100 could lead to the disappearance of many animal and plant species and an overall loss of planetary biodiversity.

There are some figures that illustrate this threat, namely the disappearance of 5,000 square miles of primary forest every second or the extinction of three species on an hourly basis.

Despite its modest size, the Mediterranean is one of the major reservoirs of marine and coastal biodiversity on Earth with 28 percent of endemic species, eight percent of the world's marine fauna and 18 percent of its marine flora. The climate, the fact it is an inland sea, and its many islands go part way to explaining this richness, making it a major area for wintering, reproduction and migration. Several sensitive habitats are key to this Mediterranean biodiversity, particularly deep-water corals,

underwater caves, dune areas, coastal forests and lagoons along with certain wetland areas that are essential for birds.

In recent decades, this natural fragility and abundance have faced threats related to intense urbanization, over-exploitation of resources, changing water regimes, the proliferation of introduced invasive species, an explosion in maritime transport, and an exponential growth in pollution, which threatens the survival of many species in the Mediterranean.

In addition to the moral consequences of an irreversible degradation of the shared resources belonging to mankind, these losses also have serious economic consequences. Indeed, biodiversity is not only a direct source of human activities of which tourism is just one example, but is also fundamental for many innovations, particularly in the health and biotechnologies industries. It is a vector for growth and innovation.

However, it is unfortunate that the evaluation of these benefits accounts for too little when faced with the pressure for immediate yet often harmful profitability from human activities. Once the costs to the environment are included, the profitability is much lower than the prospects offered by more sustainable technologies.

This is particularly true of some irresponsible fishing which is often concentrated in areas with the richest habitats. Trawling destroys the seabeds, which are often spawning grounds. One iconic and dramatic example is the overfishing of tuna, which disrupts the entire food chain. Aquaculture is barely more reassuring, representing the source of many pollutants, the transmission of epizootic diseases and the escape of domestic species to the natural environment.

The same contradiction between short and long term implications is evident for other activities that cause serious damage to the environment and biodiversity, such as polluting industries with untreated waste, certain forms of unscrupulous intensive agriculture, uncontrolled tourism and even maritime transport, the Mediterranean alone accommodating a third of the world's oil traffic and subject to degassing.

The same problem exists in terms of water resources, the third issue I would like to highlight here. Once again, this is the senseless and short-sighted exploitation of nature, under the pressure of the development of human activities. The responsibilities lie with certain economic practices that pollute watercourses and soils, adversely affecting entire water systems. They also arise, more simply, from the continued and poorly controlled development of an urbanization process, which

today more obviously affects the southern Mediterranean but the consequences of which are often equally as serious on both sides, since sanitation systems are not always more developed in the north than in the south.

The result is almost 30 million people around the Mediterranean without access to drinking water, while in some countries, nearly 70 percent of the population is not connected to any water treatment system. And as is so often the case, the sea is the victim of these practices with an annual discharge of 60,000 tons of detergent, 100 tons of mercury and 12,000 tons of phenols.

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In addition to these effects on the sea itself, the lack of water supply and treatment networks has significant effects on all the region's ecosystems, especially in many of the southern Mediterranean countries that, as a result of their climate and geological resources, have one of the world's lowest water supply per capita values. It is therefore estimated that 60 million of the region's inhabitants live in a water scarcity situation, while 180 million people in the Mediterranean

live below the poverty line. This contrast, between areas better endowed by nature and better equipped with infrastructures in the north, can only have dramatic consequences on the environment and also, quite simply, in human terms.

Beyond the food and health effects alone of such a shortage, the issue arises of the balance of societies and entire areas that can no longer find the resources needed for their survival, regularly leading to crises and tensions. It is not a new issue in the Mediterranean and the Near East, where the challenges related to access to water and the control of supplies have always been fundamental to regional geostrategic issues. Turkey, whose abundant water supply is a unique asset in the region, is particularly well placed to understand such a situation. However, the current climate crisis, coupled with the population boom observed in many areas, can only exacerbate these already acute problems. Environmental issues generate serious global threats.

Whether we consider climate, biodiversity or water issues, this bleak picture could permanently endanger the Mediterranean that we love, a region that for

centuries has been a symbol of both harmony and discovery. It could also herald even greater threats, including the current tensions witnessed around the Mediterranean basin. Whether these are economic, health-based, social or migratory, cultural or food-related, they are only the beginning. During a global crisis, there is a real risk that environmental issues will become overshadowed. While most of the countries on the planet live in a state of uncertainty about their immediate future, long-term visions that involve environmental issues are very often considered as a luxury beyond reach.

As I believe the few examples above have shown, these are nevertheless crucial issues that affect the survival of hundreds of millions of human beings. Furthermore, these environmental threats appear to be major factors in geopolitical stability or tension. In this respect, the fact that these phenomena relating to human activities have not yet reached an irreversible stage, makes it clear that effective action is not only possible but more importantly, necessary.

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In the Mediterranean, as elsewhere, the damage inflicted on nature still results from a specific development model based on a value system. Every economic system is the result of implied or discussed policy choices which can always be subject to review.

There are various courses of action available to us to save the Mediterranean and thus protect the region’s fragile balance. These are the choices that I would now like to touch briefly upon.

In my opinion, these choices fall into four categories. Firstly, policy-based choices *via* a certain number of international instruments regulating human activities and supervising practices with an environmental impact. Secondly, economic and technical choices through the commitment to encourage a less predatory development model that is more respectful of long-term requirements. Thirdly strategic choices, because these issues are the source of threats to the planetary balance, and almost always result in deeper economic or social imbalances. Finally, moral choices due to each individual’s opportunity to have a direct or indirect impact on their habitat as part of their daily lives.

Among the policy actions that are needed, I will of course refer to the international negotiations conducted under the authority of the UN, which accelerated in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio. For the past twenty years, these international efforts have made substantial progress that must be praised. The declarations adopted after various negotiations, continuing the momentum created by the founding texts, have enabled a certain number of objectives to be established and important frameworks to be created, particularly in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions or protecting certain areas or species that are particularly endangered. Despite this undeniable progress, it is clear that these international efforts have struggled to produce truly binding declarations, since these alone can lead everyone down the path that our planet needs. These actions only provide the Mediterranean, and other fragile areas, with incomplete instruments of protection.

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The conventions and treaties on marine areas such as the Montego Bay Convention in 1982 have a limited impact. Fortunately, regional institutions, particularly the European Union and to a lesser extent the Union for the Mediterranean have tackled these problems head on, and provided practical solutions. Indeed, for years now, Brussels has voluntarily worked towards environmental conservation with some of the world's most effective regulations. Since these initiatives do not cover the entire Mediterranean basin, they are still insufficient for global action.

Finally, many countries, including the Principality of Monaco, are setting up innovative legal instruments. However, by definition, these fragmented initiatives are limited to countries own borders. So, while the efforts of each one must be praised and an increase in their numbers encouraged, we must be aware of their limits.

Consequently, other policy tools are needed, based more on local realities and cooperation between those directly involved. Though smaller, these are already proving their ability to make real progress.

In the marine areas of the Mediterranean, we have therefore been working for a long time on developing special protection areas. To give just one example that I know well, since 1976, the Ramoge agreement between France, Italy, and

Monaco has resulted in important initiatives in terms of scientific, technical, legal and administrative cooperation, for more integrated management of the coastline and its protection against pollution. The Ramogepol agreement on accidental pollution is another key instrument in dealing with these major recurrent risks.

These initiatives comply with a philosophy which I believe is vital, namely the demarcation of priority areas, economic exclusion zones and marine protected areas providing certain sectors with protection from any risk of direct pollution. Therefore, two decades after the Ramoge agreement was signed, the Pelagos Sanctuary was created by the same countries, establishing an innovative area for protecting marine mammals and more generally, biodiversity.

In many Mediterranean regions, as in almost all the world's oceans, other marine protected areas are now experiencing true success, not only in ecological and economic terms but also on a scientific and educational level. By offering regeneration areas for endangered species and fragile ecosystems, the maritime economies jeopardized by short-sighted over-exploitation can be revived. Thus everyone stands to gain, especially local populations, who see their business boosted by the creation of these special status areas.

I have, for many years, been an advocate of marine protected areas that, in my opinion pave the way for local solutions that are all the more relevant as they are implemented in agreement with the populations concerned and in their best interest.

It is also in this context that the second course of action that I referred to above must be understood, that of scientific and technological innovations. Once again, this technology responds to the legitimate needs of populations who aspire to a better life and do so by relying on the driving forces of the market economy, which is still currently the safest framework for developing innovation.

In Monaco, where my Government has a proactive policy for green mobility and energy efficiency, we are therefore seeing the development of increasingly numerous and interesting technological solutions. Accordingly, we hope to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Of course, some may argue that the very size of the Principality makes such an effort anecdotal in view of the emissions from countries such as China or the United States. I believe instead that the innovations pursued here may be used as a reference point for efforts carried out elsewhere and where remarkable policies promoting renewable energies, especially photovoltaic, ultimately provide hope for a significant reduction in the growth of greenhouse gas emissions.

In the Mediterranean, it is worth developing other innovative projects, such as the “Desertec Concept”, which by 2050 could provide Europe with 15 percent of its energy from just the sunshine in the southern desert areas. For production regions, such a project opens up considerable opportunities, not only in regard to access to a clean and inexhaustible energy supply, but also to development.

Beyond the energy issues alone, and although these are obviously central in the fight against climate change, other innovations conducted around the world, allow us to consider solutions today that will provide better protection for the Mediterranean tomorrow, especially in terms of biodiversity. Every solution relies on an ability for innovation, inventiveness and the populations’ thirst for progress, to establish a new development model, more respectful of nature and better able to offer a suitable lifestyle for future generations.

Indeed, one of the difficulties of sustainable development is reconciling the interests of current generations with those of future generations and in a single process, defending the rights of those who live in different regions of the world. There is a practical difficulty, particularly in situations of resource scarcity and the depletion of stocks. It is also a moral issue, which brings into question the most intimate recesses of the mind of every human being. This is the final choice that I referred to.

As expressed by the former U.S. Vice President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore, “The climate crisis also offers us the chance to experience what very few generations in history have had the privilege of knowing: a generational mission. (...) this crisis is not really about politics at all. It is a moral and spiritual challenge.”²

The challenge is to replace a declining economic model, a transformation which requires immense effort, and is not in our own most immediate interests but rather is in anticipation of the looming threats. Therefore, we need to be motivated by reasons other than the selfish pursuit of profit or comfort. Whatever technological progress we rely on, we know that the upheaval to come will require significant and often painful efforts from everyone. The transition to a low-carbon economy will indeed be a real upheaval, demanding that we rethink how we produce, consume and travel, in short – how we live. And while these changes ultimately bring progress, they also bring constraints. Constraints that everyone can and should anticipate, by trying to match their behavior to their convictions, beginning now, with the universal duty to protect the future for the generations to come.

In the Mediterranean, every landscape reminds us of the legacy for which we act as guardians. I believe that none of us can ignore this compelling duty that makes us

² *An Inconvenient Truth*, dir. by Davis Guggenheim, DVD, Paramount Classics, 2006.

a mere bridge between the generations that have come before us on the shores of this sea and those that will follow us tomorrow.

The same requirement for solidarity also applies to international cooperation. In fact, in the same way as the environmental issue creates a temporal solidarity between generations, it generates a demand for geographical solidarity between those living in a single place, whether that place is Earth itself or more immediately a region such as ours. This is a matter of interest in an area subject to many geopolitical tensions, partly due to environmental damage. More generally, it is a question of common sense in so far, as pollution from one of the Mediterranean shores quickly affects our entire sea.

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This is why the Principality of Monaco has made development assistance a priority area in its international action, through its many partnerships with developing countries, especially in the southern Mediterranean. We know that no sustainable result can be achieved unless it is through shared global progress.

Though they cannot claim to repel all the threats to the Mediterranean on their own, most often, it is local initiatives that contribute to improved harmony in our regions, progress for populations and ultimately the establishment of more favorable economic and social conditions for protecting our shared environment.

The progress of humanity is a unified whole, where the environmental requirement cannot be ignored without overlooking its true meaning, which is that of a shared humanism. This principle prevailed when the UN established the “Millennium Development Goals” which combine poverty reduction, improved healthcare conditions for populations, cultural and political development and environmental protection under a single key ambition. In the Mediterranean, where all these issues are particularly acute, this requirement may seem more difficult to sustain. However, I believe that it is needed with more strength than anywhere else.

“What is the Mediterranean?” asked the great French historian, Fernand Braudel as an opening to his famous work, before answering “A thousand things at once.



Not one landscape, but innumerable landscapes. Not a sea but a series of seas. Not a civilization but civilizations piled upon each other.” A few pages later however, he clarifies that “in its physical as well as its human landscape, the Mediterranean crossroads, the Mediterranean diversity is present in our memories as a coherent image, a system where everything combines and re-forms into an original unit.” Thus, he establishes the paradox of this single yet plural sea, a sea which at the same time divides and yet reunites, in turn a birthplace of civilization and place of encounters and even conflicts between several civilizations.

We know that our future is linked to that of the salty expanses that surround us and, beyond them to that of the populations they nourish. If they persist in all their vitality, their purity and their richness, our future will be equal to our expectations. But if the Mediterranean is abandoned to pollution and desertification, it is the very life of our children that will be endangered, not only due to the direct damage caused by unsafe waters, poor fishing and a one dimensional economy, but also due to the geopolitical consequences brought about by any impoverishment of natural resources in this already deeply fragile area marked by a dense and disparate population.

This is why, in my opinion, consideration of the dangers, imbalances and rifts that cross our region can only lead to the acknowledgment of a compelling duty of solidarity, especially in the environmental field. And it is in the name of this solidarity that I act, by any means currently available to me.