

THE OCEAN: A NEW IDEA FOR OUR WORLD

The ocean is our life source: Our environment, our economy, and even our health depend on it. Over half of the world's population lives within 60 kilometers of the coast and more than three billion people get their main sources of protein from the oceans. Yet, with the rise of marine pollution, climate change, and overfishing, the life of the oceans is under threat. Protecting our oceans requires the collective action of the international community to find a global solution. While this is an immense task, ocean conservation is a vital interest to humankind.

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In *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*, Jules Verne writes, “The globe began with sea, so to speak; and who knows if it will not end with it?” Humanity has long known that its origin derives from the ocean, but we too often ignore that our future also heavily relies on the ocean. This is a reality: No matter how we tackle the big issues of this world, how many questions we ask about it, and more importantly, how we answer them, everything is directly related to the ocean. It is, in fact, the entire future of our world, of all of *our* futures, and depends closely on the fate we bring to ourselves and to our seas.



I am deeply convinced that our response to the variety of maritime issues regarding our oceans must be made on a global level. Covering vast geographic distances, the oceans of our planet are indeed one sole entity, within which all elements are interdependent. In this respect, the ocean offers perhaps the most obvious incarnation of this collective responsibility which we must assume, and which we have so much difficulty accepting at a time when multilateralism is readily mocked, and in a world where selfishness, segregation, and negligence are gaining currency.

Focusing on protecting our oceans should help unite our world and help us build a better understanding of it. Our civilization, like almost all the great civilizations which preceded it, is a civilization essentially maritime. 60 percent of the world’s population lives within 60 kilometers of the coast. Three-quarters of the world’s megacities are built by the sea. More than three billion of the world’s population get their main sources of protein from the oceans, and sea fishing directly or indirectly employs more than 200 million people around the globe.

As well as our habitat and our livelihood, in today’s world, development also passes by the seas. Nearly 80 percent of transcontinental trade is by sea, which is bound to increase as the giant container ships used can now transport 20 tons of goods from Asia to Europe for a price lower than a single plane ticket in economy class doing the same route. Trading has and will continue to happen more and more over the seas. This also applies to immaterial flows, which for the most part pass through the thousands of kilometers of cables that we have deposited at the bottom of the

oceans. These various human activities happening on the seas, at the seabed or at the seashore, are obviously not without consequences. Each activity has a large impact on the marine ecosystems and the balances of the oceans.

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Overfishing and an unsustainable rate of exploitation of many natural resources are gradually taking away life from the oceans. Pollution is a massive threat to ecosystems and affects the health of the seas. The search for new mineral resources is destroying the seabed. Noise pollution caused by maritime traffic affects the development of many marine species. These direct effects of our actions on our oceans are not the only cause of damage being suffered by the marine environment. Global warming poses a huge threat to our oceans. It is estimated that to this day, the oceans have absorbed 90 percent of the heat that humans have brought into the climate system. This absorption capacity does not, alas, prevent the ocean from warming; in fact, the ocean probably suffers more so than other environments.

The carbon dioxide we release into the atmosphere increases the acidity of the water at an alarming rate. This acidity is already putting many species of shells and crustaceans at risk. Degradations of ecosystems subject to warming lead to animal migration and, in some cases, the disappearance of many species. The rising sea levels, due to melting glaciers and the thermal expansion of waters, are endangering many regions around the globe. This rise has now been estimated to be of 3.4 mm per year on average since 2003, which may seem infinitesimal on a global scale, but is actually fraught with very serious consequences in the medium and long-term.

All of these changes affect the geopolitical balance of our world. There are political consequences especially for the small island states which I work regularly with, but also for all coastal countries, coastal cities, and land built onto the seas, which are most vulnerable to rising sea levels. Firstly, there are economic and social consequences for populations whose livelihood depends on the seas, when the degradation of ecosystems deprives them of their main resources. Secondly, there are health consequences for all of us who suffer from the direct and indirect pollution of the oceans, especially through a food chain now increasingly contaminated by plastic micro waste. Lastly, there are military and strategic consequences for the regional powers whose horizons are more turned towards the seas, reviving old tensions for the control of maritime spaces which are becoming more and more precious and

more and more disputed, as shown by the rapid rise in investments made by many states towards their navy.

All of these consequences demonstrate that our oceans are the epicenters of major crises in the years to come. This is why we need to look at their fate, mobilize their energies, and come up with sustainable solutions—solutions that, again, must be global. This is primarily the case because of scientific, economic, and political reasons. Scientific, because as we know, many of the problems our oceans face are primarily due to our lack of knowledge. Economic, because the long-term preservation of oceans and more broadly of our entire planet, requires the establishment of a truly sustainable and environmentally friendly way of development. And lastly, there are political reasons. By adapting our international laws to suit the realities of the oceans, and by building mechanisms capable of protecting them and by defusing the increasing tensions surrounding them.

Underlying these strategies is the need for knowledge. Science alone makes it possible to perceive what our awareness does not see—climate change or the loss of biodiversity in particular. Science makes it possible to anticipate what has not yet happened, and to prevent errors with long-term consequences from happening. Science allows us, above all, to establish universal and irrefutable foundations against the temptations of relativism or denial.

However, it must be noted that our efforts to explore and understand the oceans are far from sufficient. It is estimated today that barely 10 percent of marine fauna are listed. Although we know the surface of the seas relatively well, we ignore the majority of the intermediate zones, which are full of life forms that are essential to the equilibrium of our planet. The seabed is largely part of the *terra incognita*, given the limited efforts we have made for its exploration. In total, it is estimated that the area of the deep sea that we have been able to explore *first hand* barely covers the surface of a city the size of Paris. Furthermore, man has traveled to the moon more times than he has dived into the Mariana Trench.

There are several reasons for this. The first is the high cost of marine exploration—higher in some respects than that of space exploration. The second is the difficulties we face, as those areas are very difficult to access. The seabed is obscure and dark because of the opacity of the water, and its surface area represents more than half of the earth's surface, so there is a lot to cover. However, the main reason for the inadequacy of our scientific efforts with regard to the world's oceans lies in our lack of interest in areas that have long been thought to be of no interest, no limit, and no risk. No interest, because they are almost deserted, and with no other possible use

than traditional reasons: fishing and mining. No limit, with no real need to value the goods and services that were thought to be infinite. And no risk, because we did not know that it was necessary to protect these zones, whose degradation is today fraught with serious consequences.

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Now proved to be misconceptions, we must strive to truly protect and enhance our maritime resources. I thus come to the second aspect of the strategies we need to implement, which is the deployment of blue growth—the only way to reconcile the long-term imperatives of the ocean and the short-term goals of men who live here and now. Making use of marine renewable energies—which have immense potential—is key to encouraging blue growth. This is how we will respond to the main risk that is facing the oceans: hydrocarbons.

Hydrocarbons are responsible for much of today’s plastic pollution, which threatens entire ecosystems and contaminates the whole food chain. Hydrocarbons are also the source of a slew of adverse effects that wreak havoc on our oceans, including the majority of pollution, the partial deterioration of the seabed, oil spills, and the acidification of the waters.

This is why blue growth if we want it to be sustainable, requires first and foremost a structural change in energy systems. Furthermore, it requires the development of marine resources, particularly fisheries, whether through sustainable fisheries or responsible aquaculture, which are the only ones capable of preserving the life of the oceans. Based on recent technological advances, blue growth requires above all a real innovation policy that is capable of stimulating new activities around the seas, enhancing their resources, and stimulating a dynamic of progress. In this regard, the Boston Consulting Group recently assessed the weight of the blue economy to be 270 billion euros. But this new appreciation of the seas and their potential will not be without problems. At a time when the continued growth of the world’s population fuels rivalries for access to resources, we know that the seas will not be an exception to these tensions, which are already apparent in many parts of the world. Monitoring the predictable interest of humanity in capitalizing on the oceans’ resources will therefore be important for preventing conflict and conserving natural ecosystems.

The outcome of humanity's interest in the sea should not be the acceleration of its degradation. The sea today is in many ways a zone that is free of laws—used and abused by anyone who pleases. If nothing is done to change that, our ocean and our planet will be in danger. This reality puts the onus on multilateral forums, in particular the United Nations, to finally address these issues.

Fortunately, headway has been made in recent years. At the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, the issue regarding our oceans was officially included in the climate negotiations agenda for the first time and featured in the preamble of the Paris Agreement. The following year, COP22 dedicated a specific day to discussing ocean and climate change issues. In 2016, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) granted the request (made in particular by the Principality of Monaco and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation) to devote an interim report to the oceans and the cryosphere, after having dedicated a section of its last report to the oceans. Also in 2016, the United Nations declared the objective to “Conserve and Sustainably Use Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development” among its Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, negotiations were initiated for the adaptation of the international law of the sea, which was initiated at a time when environmental and climatic issues did not have the same importance as they do today. An initiative around biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions was launched in 2016, of which I also participated in. Important negotiations will begin in the fall of 2018, in which the Principality of Monaco will participate. Lastly, the UN Secretary-General has recently appointed a special envoy for the oceans, Peter Thomson, who is responsible for coordinating and boosting the UN's work on our oceans. I am proud to welcome his teams to the Oceanographic Institute of Paris (*Maison des Oceans*), founded in Paris over a century ago by my great-great grandfather, Prince Albert I.

All of these developments are positive and reflect the ability to catalyze the international community into meaningful action regarding our oceans. They should offer us, in the coming years, the legal tools and political principles necessary to address the major issues that are currently impacting our oceans, their preservation, and their exploitation. However, this collective ambition cannot let us forget our own responsibilities on a national level that each country can and must assume today.

As of now, we all have the duty to protect our oceans from pollution, particularly through an effective water treatment system, since land-based pollution now accounts for 80 percent of marine pollution. We can take action against climate change by adopting a series of incentives and measures against greenhouse gas emissions. We know how to put in place preservation measures, especially in marine protected areas, which now have proven positive effects.

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Protected areas promote the reasonable exploitation of marine resources by local populations, and thus contribute to more responsible growth. They also promote the regeneration of fish stocks, including those in surrounding areas, and help the resilience of degraded ecosystems. They have extremely positive economic effects. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has calculated the expansion of protected areas to 10 percent of the surface of the seas by 2020, and to 30 percent by 2030. This would generate between 490 and 920 billion dollars, creating 150,000 to 180,000 jobs by 2050. Lastly, protected areas play an important role in mitigating climate change, and promoting the development of species capable of storing carbon and revitalizing ecosystems that also play a role in climate regulation.

The unquestionable importance of these protected areas is why since 1977, the Principality of Monaco has created marine protected areas in its own territorial waters in addition to creating them in cooperation with France and Italy. Alongside other heads of state, I am regularly involved in promoting the development of such initiatives, including in international waters such as in the Ross Sea and on the borders of Antarctica, where such an initiative has finally been taken up by the international community. In that vein, together with France and Tunisia, the Principality of Monaco and my foundation created a trust fund dedicated to the financing of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean. Bringing together public and private capital, the fund aims to strengthen and sustain existing marine areas, support regional networks, encourage state involvement and, in the future, fund the development of new maritime areas.

It is essential to develop maritime areas if we want to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets that we collectively set in 2010, in particular the 11th target, which was to have 10 percent of the sea surface protected. Today, however, less than five percent of our oceans’ surfaces are protected maritime areas, yet many scientists say that an effective target would be around 30 percent. Collectively, we must seize upon the responsibility to protect the oceans of our planet. International organizations are responsible for creating a genuine law of the sea, which can govern and properly address pressing environmental issues. Countries with a maritime domain, and even those without are responsible for protecting the ocean by limiting their greenhouse gas emissions, their consumption of hydrocarbons, and the pollution of their bodies

of water. Businesses must seize blue growth to find new sources of business. Civil societies are responsible for acting more responsibly, and for adopting sustainable consumption, which does not imply the systematic degradation of our seas. And, finally, on an individual level, we must all be aware of the debt we owe to our oceans.

The collective responsibility to preserve the world's oceans can be the catalyst for a new relationship vis-à-vis our world. This relationship will finally bring out the positive side of globalization, governed by shared rules that benefit both people and businesses, and that is concerned about those who live today as much as for the lives of future generations. This is a relationship that will open up new political, philosophical, and economic horizons—a relationship that at its core will understand that protecting our oceans is a vital interest for humankind.