

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

For its third edition, this symposium appears as a necessary routine, since it invites us to focus our thoughts and attention periodically on the Arctic. However distant, the Arctic which I visited once again two weeks ago, must remain a constant concern for us all.

It is therefore a real pleasure for me to see you all here again today. I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the organisers of the event, in particular the International Polar Foundation and its President, Alain Hubert.

Over the last two years, our meetings have highlighted the importance of coordinated and pro-active action in the Arctic. They have also served as a reminder of how urgent such action is.

When the latest scientific studies confirm the accelerated melting of the ice cap, which would result in the disappearance of the summer sea ice within the next few decades, if not years, this urgency is no longer debatable. The only element under discussion today is not the reality of the threat over the poles, but its extent and the timescale.

This threat is already a reality for those living in this part of the world. As I have just indicated, I was in Nunavut a few days ago.

I also travelled to the Nunavik region of Northern Quebec where I had the opportunity of meeting many of the inhabitants. For them, the issue of global warming is a reality and seen in a different light. They witness the degradation of their environment on a daily basis and watch with concern the opening up of commercial maritime routes and the developing exploitation of resources.

The consequences generate concerns along with the need of necessary adaptation measures that need to be taken such as the preservation of the landscapes, fauna and flora and the remarkable biotopes which give this region its distinctive character.

There is also the need to adapt the lifestyles of these people whose age-old history is deeply linked with harsh climates in which they have forged their identity, their culture and their way of life.

It is therefore our responsibility, as we are still relatively unscathed, to inform and make understand that the reality of these not so distant people is also ours, that the changes in their environment have or will soon have a direct impact on us too. The same effects of the phenomena occurring there will be felt here shortly.

It is urgent to act. Urgent for them, for us and for the balance of our planet which is becoming increasingly fragile.

In order to do this, it is essential that we intensify our efforts to fight climate change. I do not need to emphasise the necessity of this action, which involves a number of initiatives. From the international negotiations that I attended last June in Rio, to the measures to promote renewable energies, several of which I have implemented in Monaco and those of which my Foundation supports through various partnership operations worldwide.

We still have the capacity of limiting the effects of the global warming which has already taken hold. In order to achieve this goal, I would like to suggest different courses of action such as providing support to the indigenous populations who need to preserve their culture, their identity, their sovereignty.

They also need to adapt, to acquire the keys of this world which must not be built without them.

At a time when the future of the Arctic is so uncertain, how can we not hear the voices of those living there, those who embody this region? How can we contemplate their future, if we do not involve them in the process and don't provide the means for them to take direct responsibility?

This is why for many years I have supported projects such as the one conducted by the University of the Arctic, which offers these peoples from the Far North, the capabilities that will enable them to take control of their destiny.

At a time when the Arctic is attracting new economic interests which need to be monitored and a new green economy is emerging, these populations must have access to these changes.

The difficulties of global action must not deflect us from more limited, but no less important initiatives - on the contrary. It is precisely the complexity of large-scale solutions that should spur us into increasing initiatives on a more modest scale.

It is with this goal in mind that we need to support the various initiatives to create national parks or local classification programs currently in progress, for example within the scope of Quebec's North Plan.

It is in the same spirit that I am also advocating the creation of marine protected areas, whose efficiency has been proven both for the preservation of natural resources and for the development of populations. I hope that several such marine areas will be created in the Arctic, in particular in the Lancaster Sound where my Foundation supports the action of the Pew Environment Trust and the Canadian boreal initiative.

I have not lost hope either of seeing the creation of protected zones elsewhere, such as around Franz Josef Land. This is indeed the direction of the discussions I had on this topic with President Putin, who appeared open to an initiative along these lines.

This spirit of multi-level initiative is also at the root of another approach which I feel is pertinent and for which Alain Hubert is one of the most fervent advocate: technological innovation.

While global warming creates new conditions, human ingenuity will allow us to cope with them using our intelligence and creativity. The damage we are inflicting on the Polar Regions can be limited, countered and adjusted. Solutions are possible. The new problems that confront us also harbour their share of progress and hope.

As with all matters concerning the preservation of these regions, it is essential that research efforts increasingly focus on these issues.

That is another priority action I would like to develop addressing not only the scientific community and the crucial role it plays in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century but also the economic and political leaders who must do everything in their power to encourage research.

This research should be bold and innovative, in search for new data and shed light on our vision for the future.

It also should be independent, which must be conducted without bias, in order to direct honest and lucid discussions on this future.

And finally, it must be collaborative, whereby cooperation and emulation between laboratories and between nations are organised more effectively, as this issue of the Arctic concerns the whole of humanity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

As Pasteur said, "Science has no native land".

That is why, in the face of the upheaval in the Arctic, we all need to feel united by a shared destiny.

A destiny which currently poses many threats, but is also full of hope, if we work together to preserve this region, to mitigate global warming and to combat its effects.

It is up to us now to prove that we are capable to undertake such action!

Thank you.