

Dear Kristijan Curavic,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

I am delighted to welcome you to Monaco for the launch of the Special Protection Environment Ecology Diving Unit, which embodies both the ambition and philosophy that are close to my heart, as they are to all those who care for and respect the sea.

Probably more than anywhere else, we are aware here of the sea's importance in the balance of life.

Surrounded by the blue waters of the Mediterranean, we have the opportunity to assess the need to protect it for our own balance. Unfortunately, we also witness, year after year, how irresponsible behaviour is threatening this fragile balance.

The sea is far more than just one parameter among others. It is an essential element of life; it lies at the heart of our representations of the world and is at the root of all human development.

And yet although the ocean is this universal source from which all life derives, it has to be said that today we are dangerously ill-treating it. Too frequently, the areas that should be maintained with the most respect and most care are in fact the most neglected. Very often, this universal matrix is used as a sad dumping ground.

Better than others, you understand this reality and have agreed to do something to combat it. Brushing aside the challenges that accompany any global action focused on the environment, you have shown no hesitation in addressing the most trivial aspect of things. An aspect that although, at first sight, is undoubtedly less gratifying, is so very important: that of repairing, tirelessly and with humility, the damage caused by our civilisation.

Better than others, you understand that widespread action concerning such an issue depends less on the financial and political means implemented than on its ability to mobilise. By bringing together teams of divers motivated by common goals, you are turning an individual reflex into a large-scale collective effort.

In this respect, your approach is similar to the principles on which I myself have chosen to base my initiatives. Naturally, it requires political action. However it cannot be fully effective without the operational side of action such as that conducted by my Foundation, today a supporter of the Global Underwater Awareness Association, for an event that I believe will be full of meaning and hope.

With your team, a skilful combination of experience and enthusiasm, I know that this SPEED Unit will drive forward the cause of the sea, both in the natural environment and in the hearts of people. This is now an urgent and vital task that must be enacted before it is too late. As Lord Byron said, "Till taught by pain, Men really know not what good water's worth».

Thank you.