

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would like to thank you most sincerely for the honor to be accepted as one of yours, in this setting dedicated to education and science, where the future of the Arctic is not a remote or secondary concern.

(Thank you for this sword which could be useful during some difficult international climate negotiations)

Very often, my action faces the belief from many of our contemporaries that environmental issues remain obscure.

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Of course, they can see how some ecosystems are deteriorating from the human activities.

Of course, they are aware of the reality of climate change whose effects they sometimes notice during a particularly harsh winter or spectacular weather events.

Of course, they can see how some species are disappearing.

Of course, they know that our resources are being depleted, due to our irresponsible consumption patterns and perpetual headlong rush.

Too often however, all of this remains theoretical.

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It is more convenient to avoid facing these issues and to exclude any questions arising therefrom. They are

questions concerning our lifestyle, our consumption patterns, the way we travel and the way we feed ourselves.

Faced with the prospect of re-evaluating our everyday habits –which would represent a significant challenge – we prefer to turn a blind eye. Telling ourselves that all of this is still uncertain. That we have time to find solutions. That we will adapt to a new climate. That we will survive with a depleted biodiversity. That we have been through worse. That Planet Earth has been through worse.

We prefer to tell ourselves that there are more urgent matters, more important issues.

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This approach makes it so difficult to make profound changes, even though it is so important to do so. Even though we are now aware of the seriousness of these threats and their universality. Even though none of us can consider him/herself immune from these global events.

That is why too often we, as environmentalists, feel that we are preaching in the wilderness.

For these reasons, I am particularly moved to be among you today because these questions resonate differently here.

For many years climate change in Lapland has not just been about a few degrees up or down, but has meant disruption to the rhythm of the seasons and changes to the ecosystems.

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You know better than anyone else how important – vital even - such changes are, not only for many species, but also for humankind.

Above all you know how human development and fulfilment – *our* development and *our* fulfilment – closely depend on the preservation of the universe in which we live.

This ability to make environmental issues human issues is today essential. It is in fact one of the greatest challenges we face.

I would therefore like to focus on this challenge, by approaching it from three different standpoints, which I believe shed light on the issues we need to address.

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Establishing a link between the environment and humanity means first of all thinking of the local populations and indigenous people who are both the primary beneficiaries and the most knowledgeable of their environment - and who therefore are often its greatest defenders. They know better than anyone else the importance and fragility of the land on which their history is based.

However, establishing this link also means thinking of humanity as a whole, because the Arctic, perhaps more than

any other geographical region in this world, has a direct impact on the entire Planet.

And lastly, it means thinking of future generations, whose existence hinges on the decisions we make – or don't make – now to reverse the current situation.

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Through these three approaches of humanity – local, global and long-term – I would now like to give you an idea of the way in which I strive to take action.

As far as I am concerned, taking action for the local populations is the top priority.

This means taking into consideration, as an overriding imperative, the aspirations and situation of our contemporaries. It means working with States and institutions directly concerned. It means helping those who are in need, as does my Foundation by means of programs to

support communities affected by climate change or damage to their environment.

Above all it means listening to these populations, because they have precious knowledge of their environment and how it is evolving.

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That is why I endeavor to go and meet them, as I have done over the last few years, in particular in these Arctic regions.

I went to listen to the people of Nunavut and North Quebec confronted with the permafrost melt and the sometimes irremediable damage to their living conditions, leading to major destruction in their habitat and infrastructure.

I came to listen to them here in Lapland – these victims of global warming, reindeer herders faced with

unprecedented changes to the ecosystem from which they have derived their livelihoods for centuries.

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I listened to them in Norway, in the University of Kautokeino where young people from the indigenous populations study to assimilate the rules of our world, so that they can freely decide on their future, and adapt to the disruptions they are faced with.

Taking action for these populations also means giving them the means to become key players in their future.

The second point I would like to raise is the future of the Poles which is indeed an international issue, which concerns humankind as a whole.

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This is of course due to increasing appetites around the Arctic today. The increasing importance of the Arctic Council is reflected by the growing number of its members, as sadly its powerlessness to reach a consensus as it was the case some days ago at the last meeting of the council.

These appetites are the result of the combination of three phenomena.

There is global warming, which has opened up new routes and made areas accessible which until now were inaccessible.

There is technical progress, which increases our capacity to expand human activities and makes it possible to exploit resources, which until now were preserved.

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And sadly, there is the relative legal vacuum concerning this heritage, of an era where such issues would not arise in these terms, and which prompts this headlong rush fraught with threats.

That is why it is essential to address this gap, by working together to ensure greater inclusion of Arctic and Polar issues in international agendas.

In order to achieve this goal, we first of all need to gain a better understanding of the phenomena which are underway and their multiple consequences.

This is the crucial role of science, an essential prerequisite for action. It alone provides universal certainties, beyond ideologies.

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In this respect, I am delighted that the IPCC selected the project, implemented by the Principality of Monaco and my Foundation, for an interim report devoted to the oceans and ice regions of the globe. The conclusions of this work, launched in Monaco over two years ago, will be released in the Principality next autumn.

I am convinced that they will provide precious tools to move forward.

Moving forward now means working on the implementation of new political and legal tools, more suited to current challenges.

For example, developing marine protected areas and terrestrial protected areas in the Arctic.

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It is vital that certain activities be banned, such as oil and gas drilling, and to control others, such as commercial shipping. All of this should be the focus of specific and coordinated work, in particular between coastal States, because we need to look at the preservation of these ecosystems on a broader regional scale.

Concerning marine protected areas, we urgently need to increase their number in international waters which are currently, in many respects, the blind spot as far as environmental preservation is concerned.

This was achieved for instance in Antarctica in the Ross Sea, after long negotiations, in which I was involved. It is my wish of course that similar projects be developed in the Arctic.

To do so, I believe that it would be useful to improve one of our tools, which would enable us to address the challenges of these regions more effectively.

This tool is the Montego Bay Convention. Since 1982, this text has been the only one which has enabled us to outline the common management of the Sea and the High Seas.

It provides us with a relevant framework for true collective progress, provided that we seize this opportunity. That is why I have hopes in the discussions currently taking place at the UN on biodiversity protection beyond national jurisdictions, or BBNJ.

We also need to conduct more specific work on the Arctic, a region for which we could have more international cooperation.

Based on the notion of collective responsibility and, without undermining the sovereignty of these coastal countries, the higher interest of science and humanity for these regions would need to be confirmed.

We should also give priority to the UN framework to combat what is indeed the greatest danger threatening the Arctic today: I am of course referring to climate change.

As we all know, this is the major challenge of this century, a challenge for which we all need to agree to make the necessary efforts, so that binding decisions can at last be made, capable of curbing this terrifying global warming.

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We now come to the third point I wish to talk about today: the link between the situation of the Poles, the need

to preserve them, and our more global responsibility in regard to future generations and the future of the Planet which we will be leaving them.

Everyone here is I think aware that, if we do nothing, we are jeopardizing the future of our children, the very future of humankind.

The alarm bells are ringing increasingly frequently.

Last summer, temperatures of over 30°C were recorded in several areas beyond the Arctic Circle with night temperatures reaching over 20°C. And this year again, in Alaska, temperatures reached 15 degrees higher than normal in February and March.

We can therefore see the beginnings of the disastrous scenario of climate change well above the 1.5°C limit which is considered bearable for the Planet, its ecosystems and its species. Among these, the human species is already suffering from these disruptions sometimes dramatically, as shown by

their growing frequency, certainly still limited, but for how long?

Faced with this change, we know to what extent the Polar regions are in a particularly difficult situation. We know that they are the first victims. But we also know – and the IPCC's next interim report which I mentioned, will help us to understand this – that they represent essential protection which we need to help and defend.

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The reflection capacities of ice limit the impact of solar rays. The methane locked within the permafrost contributes to restraining the acceleration of climate change. And the Poles play a crucial role in regulating the global climate, without which many of our Planet's ecological balances would be compromised.

For all of these reasons, protecting the Poles and protecting the Arctic now means protecting the future of the Planet.

Protecting the Arctic and our common future therefore implies the implementation of a genuine energy transition, as the Principality of Monaco is doing at its own level, with the prospect of carbon neutrality by 2050.

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It is ensuring that every country engages in this process, in particular through international climate negotiations.

These negotiations provide the venue for a crucial meeting between our generation and future generations – between our era and its responsibility.

Despite the challenges, we are making progress. Despite the disappointments, we remain focused. And

despite the importance of these negotiations, we also know that they cannot do everything.

Taking action to protect our climate, our Planet and its Poles, also means implementing a new development paradigm, and in order to do so, involving all sectors of civil society.

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It means inventing a new path, made of audacity and imagination, which needs to be deployed here more than anywhere else.

In the words of Jean Malaurie, the great French scientist, explorer, writer and lover of the Arctic regions “In this Arctic, we need (...)to invent a green economy (...), an economy that is useful not only for the peoples of the North but for the entire universe. Undoubtedly, the sustainable development of the Arctic is one of the greatest challenges given to the United Nations, to all its partner organizations. »

It is therefore up to us to develop this sustainable development and this green economy.

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We must do so by promoting low-carbon mobility and the development of renewable energies, which are increasingly proving their worth.

We must do so by fostering more efficient management of natural resources, an economy finally taking into consideration the real impact of our activities on the environment.

We must do so by developing ecosystem services, which should at last be appreciated and recognized for their true worth.

We must do so with short supply chains, which are increasingly being developed and proving popular with consumers.

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The great victory of the past few years, the great cause for hope that should prompt us into stepping up our efforts, is this awareness, the new resolve of our contemporaries to act before it is too late.

It is an unprecedented movement I think in human history, due to its speed and its globality.

It should guide us and motivate us, wherever the future of our Planet is at stake.

This is also why I very much appreciate the honor bestowed upon me today. The eminent distinction you are

granting me is testimony to your commitment and your concern. It is testimony to our precious unity in the face of these major challenges.

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That is why, once again, I would like to express my sincerest and warmest thanks.

Thank you.