

Our Ocean – Panel on ocean acidification – Valparaiso, 5 October 2015
Address by H.S.H. the Prince

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

It was in Monaco that, more than six years ago, a declaration was adopted, one of the first to alert public opinion and world leaders to this issue. It is also in Monaco that the International Atomic Energy Agency has set up its Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre. As you can see, then, this is an issue to which I am particularly committed.

Because the facts are out there. The first signs of the damage caused by acidification are already appearing, obliging us to act and to act quickly. It is clearly not easy. I will therefore simply discuss some of the areas which I think are essential.

The first is, of course, the priority given to research. Given the length and indirect nature of the timescale involved, it is critical to have solid knowledge, the only basis on which action can be built. And yet, despite the progress made in recent years, we still know very little about the reality we are facing. Our first duty must therefore be to improve our knowledge by supporting research.

It is equally important that we should not be afraid to invent and explore all possible technical solutions, as complex and far-off as they may be today. These solutions may, in the future, allow us to limit acidification by capturing or removing some of the CO₂ in the atmosphere.

But above all, we must combat the main cause of acidification: anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. This is a global challenge, which will naturally be at the heart of COP21 in a few weeks. I will not dwell on this here.

Another priority must be preventing the pollution of coastal waters, which, we must not forget, is also a major contributor to ocean acidification. This is a huge problem in the Mediterranean. Solutions are currently being developed, through regional management in which I believe and which I support.

It is also imperative to start thinking about the adaptation measures which will sooner or later be essential. When we see the effects that acidification is now having on certain activities, such as oyster farming, I believe it is clear that it will be difficult to completely reverse the trend by the end of the century. These industries are already being heavily impacted in some regions. Scientific estimates anticipate an average reduction in the pH of the ocean surface of

between 0.14 and 0.35 units by 2100.

There is therefore an urgent need to start thinking now about how to adapt, while, of course, continuing in parallel to search for effective global solutions. This is our responsibility.

Finally, I think that raising public awareness and educating leaders about an often ignored issue is an important challenge. Acidification represents a rare opportunity in that it offers a tangible illustration, including in economic terms, of greenhouse gas emissions, which is often perceived as an abstract or remote concept. To this end, I am delighted that the AMAO, the Monegasque Ocean Acidification Association, established in Monaco with the support of My Foundation and chaired by Jean Pierre Gattuso, who I salute here today, is able to serve as a useful vehicle for this process.

Understand, act and anticipate: these are the demands that ocean acidification makes of us. I believe that they can also be extremely useful on a much broader scale.

Thank you.