

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you in Bern tonight for this event, which is as enjoyable as it is beneficial. Allow me to express my sincere thanks to the organizers, and in particular Mr Claudio Righetti and his team.

I would also like to pay my respects to Ms Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor in charge of the environment, transport, energy and communications.

And I am delighted and honoured by the presence of a large number of eminent personalities.

As you know, part of my action is dedicated to defending the environmental cause and the preservation of our Planet.

It is neither the place nor the time to deliver an academic speech on this issue. However it may be worthwhile to recall that this cause is not in any way abstract or far removed.

What brings us together is a common awareness of the dangers that hang over each and every one of us. Whatever our situation, nationality, age or opinion, we are indeed all dependent on the same natural mechanisms, all subject to the same laws, all threatened by the same dangers.

Yet the balances of our world are currently jeopardised on a number of fronts. Global warming threatens to disrupt the Planet's entire climate. The polar ice is already receding at a rate that has no parallel in records going back to thousands of years, extreme weather events are increasing and ocean acidity levels are rising dangerously, threatening entire segments of underwater life - thus all life on Earth.

In addition to these threats, recently highlighted by the IPCC's latest publications, other dangers, less publicized but just as real, impend. Animal and plant species are disappearing, whole regions are the victims of extremely serious pollution, ecosystems are irremediably disrupted... And our whole Planet suddenly seems fragile.

This situation is the result of the decades, even centuries, during which humanity thought it could remain free from any duty towards nature, considering it an inexhaustible source of wealth... This is how we began, we can truthfully say, pillaging what is our common heritage and, even more so, that of our children...

But now that we know, it is vital to take action. It is our immediate duty and also our historic responsibility.

It is what I do month after month, year after year, as the head of the Monegasque State or through my Foundation dedicated to the fight against climate change, the preservation of biodiversity and improved water resources management - three key issues in which the majority of the environmental challenges faced by our world are concentrated.

Since 2006, this Foundation has conducted or supported over 250 projects worldwide. Projects as close to the field as possible, each time supported by the sound expertise of scientists and implemented in partnership with local players. At the scale of these projects, of course rather modest, I believe that they prove that action is possible despite the difficulties and that giving in to such challenges is never an acceptable option.

This is the whole purpose of my commitment, a commitment of heart and reason, which I am delighted to share with you this evening and that some of you, I know, have already adopted. Moreover I wish to extend my warmest greetings to my friend Bertrand Piccard, whose passionate commitment to climate protection and its concrete expression in a project such as Solar Impulse, is proof that we can live and travel in the future without harming the environment.

Within the great tradition of excellence that characterizes your beautiful country, he also embodies the following words by S en eque which summarizes our task: "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult."

Nothing would be more dreadful than to give up. That is why we must be ready to dare all for the sake of our beautiful Planet.

Thank you.