

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is a genuine pleasure for me to be with you for this exceptional evening.

In these times of concern about the future, I feel it is important to meet, as we are doing so today, around talents from all continents.

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I refer to a time of concern because I was in New York a few weeks ago for the High-Level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000. As you know, the purpose of this meeting was to take stock five years before the term of these Goals. It enabled Heads of State and Government to assert common hopes and values, as well as assess all that has not been accomplished and what remains to be done.

It happens that, in the area of environmental conservation that brings us here today, there is little cause for optimism.

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Yet, seeing you all gathered here gives me hope.

Not an unfounded optimism that would justify remaining inactive but rather be a determined optimism that can lead to greater daring.

I can be positive when I observe the fine scope and quality of the work accomplished by champions of the environment. In the isolation of laboratories or the anonymity of natural reserves as in the world's greatest precincts, a greater number of men and women enable us each day to move forward, prepare the ground for unknown areas and use science to shed light on the basic mechanisms of our universe.

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The personalities we will be honouring tonight are among these precursors. This is why I am particularly proud of contributing to highlighting their work.

Ladies and gentlemen, their work is irreplaceable and nothing of what we do would be possible ; nothing of what we hope for could be foreseen.

And I am still optimistic in observing the increasingly broad attention brought to these issues among people throughout the world.

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I have the opportunity to travel often and meet personalities from very different backgrounds and I can assure you that mentalities are progressing faster than international negotiations.

The best proof is in this country's amazing evolution: China who was said, just a few years ago, to be resistant to all environmental concerns. Who would have predicted five or ten years ago that the choice of Shanghai to host this meeting would have seemed so natural ?

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Please allow me to pay tribute here to the considerable progress China has been accomplishing year after year in raising awareness and taking action in favour of our planet. This country's government and people illustrate the profound changes that are taking place all over the world today.

And, finally, I am optimistic when I see you here, representing different professions, convictions and continents, and united in a single will to keep our most precious gift from being lost. Such unity, such capacity for exchange and dialogue are great assets.

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At the time of looking back once a year on the missions undertaken by my Foundation, I would like, obviously to thank all those who have made these actions possible despite the inevitable obstacles. I would also like to tell them that their main strength is in their openness, listening capacity and attention to others.

Through our partnership, we can evaluate the daily enrichment provided by such meetings.

.../...

They enable us to take effective action to protect the flora and fauna in which we live.

They make us realise more acutely the impact of climate change on our lives and promote the implementation of mitigating measures.

They also help improve people's access to water, one of the keys to meet the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations.

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Indeed the protection of Nature, the fight against climate change and access to water are above all the business of the men and women, convinced that it is always the weakest who are the first to suffer from environmental problems. They have chosen to take action and be fully dedicated to a cause that overwhelms them.

Tonight, I would like to pay tribute to them, and especially the three winners of my Foundation's 2010 awards in the three main areas of our action: James Lovelock for the fight against climate change, Peter Hamilton Raven for the protection of biodiversity and Malin Falkenmark for water conservation.

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I would also like to pay tribute to the man who will receive our Special Award tonight, Wang Shi, whose many initiatives in favour of the environment, both professionally and through associations, are a model for China as for other countries.

If, in the words of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, “Man’s finest profession is to unite humankind”, Tonight, I believe that my Foundation’s finest profession is to bring together these exemplary spirits in a common hope, as it gathers daily in the field hundreds of dedicated champions ready to defend our Planet.

.../...

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would like to conclude with a word about the film you will see tonight.

As you know, 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. It will be under the spotlights in a few weeks by the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity to be held in Nagoya. I hope that this conference will lead to significant progress as for the economic value assigned to biodiversity.

.../...

This vital and current issue is something to which we wanted today to dedicate a hymn. It is “*Hidden beauty*”, revealed here in a world premiere thanks to a fruitful partnership with Disneynature, whose representatives I wish to welcome here.

I am certain you will remember this fascinating film’s message.

Thank you.