

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Let me first say how delighted I am to be here with you today, to discuss a subject which is particularly dear to my heart.

I would also like to thank the co-organisers of this event, the International Polar Foundation and its Chairman, Alain Hubert as well as the Aspen Institute which, together with my foundation, has allowed us to meet here.

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I would also like to extend a warm welcome to President Van Rompuy, who I know is sensitive to these issues. The European Council and the Heads of State that it brings together are essential partners for all environmentalists and especially Arctic defenders. Thanks to you, we can hope for tangible progress.

Because time is short. We know the facts, all these direct and indirect effects of global warming which are tragically affecting the Polar Regions. You have all seen the very latest reports, especially those using satellite data, which establish that at the end of this summer the retreat of sea ice was the largest ever. We know that the weakening of sea ice, which acts as a temperature regulator, is accelerating

climate change. We also know that all these developments, especially the ice melt, open up economic and commercial prospects which in turn pose new environmental risks.

Despite the growing awareness of our contemporaries to the consequences of global warming in the Arctic, these dangers are far from being contained. Instead, year on year they are increasing, demanding real and significant efforts from us.

Faced with a subject that affects us all, it is therefore essential that everyone feels responsible.

.../...

But it is also fundamental that we coordinate our efforts. That is why I believe that this meeting is particularly useful, because it aims to exchange points of view and make those involved discuss a subject with many dimensions and ramifications.

Among those involved, I am obviously initially thinking about the Arctic states, who are the first witnesses and sometimes the first victims of the imbalances that the region is now experiencing. But I am also thinking about other States, members of the European Union, of course, but also those further afield, who must be concerned by the situation in these areas essential for all of humanity.

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Indeed, it would be paradoxical to place the responsibility for the Arctic zones on the adjoining states alone, when we are now aware of the importance of these areas for the whole planet. While the Arctic ice plays an important role in the world's climate balance, do not forget that it also suffers from the world's excesses, not only those of countries in the Arctic Circle. This is why all States must come together around this common concern, regardless of their geographic or economic situation.

However, despite their good intentions, governments cannot act alone. They need arenas for talks and appropriate multilateral decision-making.

.../...

Of course, I am thinking of the European Union, which has proved its commitment in protecting the environment and fighting climate change over several years. But also of other regional organisations who must also be mobilised. And, above all, I am thinking about the UN, which has given us a date in a few days time in Nagoya for an important summit on the future of biodiversity, along with the Cancun Conference at the beginning of December.

One year after the disappointment of Copenhagen, this date will hopefully be the opportunity to prove that ambitious decision making is possible in terms of the environment, even within the complex framework of international negotiation.

.../...

This is what civil societies are demanding, calling on governments to act courageously. Thanks to them, governments are routinely encouraged to be more ambitious. Thanks to civil society, they know that they can rely on the motivation of others such as scientists, whose contribution cannot be emphasised enough, but also NGOs and companies.

Day after day we see that the environmental cause only progresses when it can involve all those who act, think, research and invent.

.../...

And it never progresses so fast than when it falls in with other interests, whether they are economic, strategic or even moral.

Because it is not an insult to our commitment to recognise that our environmental concerns all have different motivations. Whether it is a case of increasing a company's competitiveness or acting for future generations, these motivations are all factors to be considered in our mobilisation work.

There are no reasons to oppose individual interests. There are those who act and those who are resigned.

.../...



Everyone now needs to be involved. What I just said about States also applies on other levels, collective and individual: as long as our planet's situation affects all our lives, no-one can pretend that its existence would not affect the fate of our world.

This responsibility must bring us together.

That is why I wanted to be here among you, for this discussion open to varied and complementary skills and backgrounds.

.../...

It is the meeting of these points of view, *our* meeting, which can give rise to solutions.

Faced with a global danger, our duty now is to use all the tools we have, whether legally binding solutions or more flexible incentive schemes. We can then meet the constraints and requirements of everyone, especially the populations concerned.

Indeed, we must never forget that the fate of the Arctic, while important for us all, is a daily challenge for the millions of men and women who live on these lands.

.../...

Ladies and Gentlemen, we must once again make these populations the centre of the debate, never forgetting that the major subject is always and always will be **man**. Injuries to the environment are always damages inflicted on humanity.

Of course, I am thinking of the direct threats to these populations' way of life, which every year see their natural resources reduced. But I am also thinking of the major changes in social customs and mindsets, of those thousand silent revolutions which alter the balances and traditions inherited from the long history of these peoples.

.../...

Along with their heritage, it is however part of the cultural and linguistic heritage of humanity which is threatened. This is why we must help them.

For these populations, as for all those who work in these areas, today we have a duty to talk, the duty to listen to interests which inevitably differ from each other. Not to give up when we notice these differences, but instead find ways to overcome them.

This dialogue must allow us to coordinate knowledge and skills, but also to trade solutions which have been tried in different places. Because solutions do exist.

.../...

I am firstly referring to the rehabilitation of large areas located beyond the Arctic Circle and for a long time assigned to military activities. In fact, I was in Moscow a few weeks ago, where we had long discussions with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin about the creation of the Novaya Zemlya reserve and its development: I believe this is an extremely promising avenue, which could be tried in other places.

I am also thinking of the creation of protected marine areas which, in the Arctic would allow the protection and regeneration of stocks of certain threatened species, by creating “sanctuaries”. The successful experiment conducted for several years in the Mediterranean by France, Italy and Monaco to protect marine mammals, is also worth expanding. .../...

Here, I would also go back to the idea put forward in Moscow to create, beyond the areas under State control, thus the high seas, a sort of Arctic marine reserve dedicated to science and based on what has been achieved in the Antarctic.

I would lastly like to emphasise one final point, on the subject of this crucial dialogue for the protection of our environment: its capacity to share these vital concerns with the greatest number of people.

For all those who live on this planet, we must make them understand that the future of the Poles is also their future. Without the support of public opinion, nothing will be possible; with it, there are grounds for hope. .../...

Without doubt an enormous task, but one about which I cannot help feeling optimistic, seeing the progress accomplished in recent years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

“No-one can feel responsible and despairing at the same time” wrote Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in his magnificent

novel *Wind, Sand and Stars*. I believe that these words, written in the desert must guide our commitment today.

It is because we are responsible for our future that we are not allowed to despair. And it is because we hope that we can act.

Thank you.