

*Presentation of the Peter Benchley Ocean Award
Washington, 14th May 2015*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

DEAR FRIENDS,

I AM TRULY HONORED TO RECEIVE THIS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD TODAY, IN THE PRESENCE OF SO MANY PROMINENT FIGURES AND EMINENT PRIZE-WINNERS, WHO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH TO PROMOTE THE PROTECTION AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR GLOBAL SEAS.

LOOKING BEYOND THE QUALITY OF THIS ASSEMBLY, I AM IN PARTICULAR STRIKED BY ITS DIVERSITY. THROUGH US, A CROSS-SECTION OF OUR WORLD IS GATHERED HERE, FOR A DEMONSTRATION OF PROFOUND UNITY.

WHETHER WE COME FROM THE STEEP SHORES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, AS I DO, FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS OR AMERICA'S VAST OPEN SPACES, WHETHER WE ARE SCIENTISTS, POLITICIANS OR MILITANTS, WE ARE ALL UNITED HERE FOR A COMMON CONCERN AND OBJECTIVE WHICH IS TO SAVE OUR ENDANGERED OCEANS.

AT A TIME WHEN OUR WORLD HAS TO FACE NUMEROUS CHALLENGES, CRISIS AND CONFLICTS, I BELIEVE THAT SUCH CONCERN MUST UNITE US MORE THAN EVER BEFORE.

IT IS A NECESSITY BECAUSE THE OCEANS, WHICH ARE ONE OF THE SOURCES OF LIFE, REMAIN SPACES ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE ITS PERPETUATION.

IT IS A NECESSITY BECAUSE THE OCEANS, THROUGH THEIR BEAUTY AND THEIR MYSTERY, UNITE HUMAN-BEINGS, WHATEVER THEIR SITUATION, THEIR NATIONALITY OR THEIR FAITH. ABOVE ALL THE "OCEAN CAUSE" NEEDS THE MOBILIZATION AND TALENT OF EACH AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL.

THIS IS PETER BENCHLEY'S MESSAGE, WHO SPOKE OF THEM AND BROUGHT THEM TO LIFE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, SO THAT AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE COULD APPRECIATE THEIR COMPLEXITY AND WEALTH.

WE FIND OURSELVES TODAY, ALL TOGETHER, FACING A GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF UNPRECEDENTED MAGNITUDE.

THIS CHALLENGE IS TO IMPLEMENT ACTION WHICH WILL USE EVERY MEANS TO CHANGE THE CURRENT SITUATION IN A CONCRETE, FAST AND EFFICIENT MANNER:

- I REFER TO THE MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS OF COURSE, WHETHER THEY CONCERN THE LAW OF THE SEA OR THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE, WHICH HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE OCEANS. WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT AND EXPEDITE THEM;

- I AM ALSO THINKING OF NATIONAL POLICY, THROUGH WHICH EVERY NATION MUST ASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITY AND IMPLEMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT THE SEAS, BY MEANS OF LAND-BASED POLLUTION CONTROL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS, SUCH AS MARINE PROTECTED AREAS OR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES POLICIES, TWO EXAMPLES AMONG MANY;

- I AM THINKING OF THE ECONOMY, WHOSE PLAYERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY BLUE GROWTH. THEY MUST ACCEPT THAT THEIR LONG-TERM INTEREST CANNOT LIE IN THE DEGRADATION OR THE OVER-EXPLOITATION OF MARINE, FISH AND MINERAL RESOURCES;

- THE ROLE OF SCIENTISTS IS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR SEAS AND TO PROTECT THEM MORE EFFECTIVELY, BUILDING ON OBJECTIVE REALITIES;

- THE CIVIL SOCIETY, ASSOCIATIONS, NGOS MUST ASSUME THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, SUPPORTING THIS GREAT GLOBAL MOVEMENT AND FULLY PLAYING THEIR ROLE;

- ALSO THE MEDIA WHOSE POWER IS IMMENSE WHEN IT IS A QUESTION OF ENLIGHTENING PUBLIC OPINION AND CONVINCING OUR CONTEMPORARIES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OCEANS AND THE URGENT NEED TO PROTECT THEM;

- FINALLY, THE ARTISTS WHO ARE CAPABLE OF SPEAKING TO PEOPLE IN A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE, UNITING THEM AROUND COMMON DREAMS. IN PARTICULAR, PETER BENCHLEY, WHO DEMONSTRATED SO CLEARLY "*THE SEA IN ALL ITS BEAUTY, MYSTERY AND POWER*".

AND OF COURSE I AM THINKING OF YOU, MY DEAR WENDY BENCHLEY, AS WELL AS ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THE "BLUE FRONTIER CAMPAIGN", WHO, WITH THESE AWARDS, ARE MAKING A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO AWARENESS, EXCHANGE AND COMMITMENT REGARDING THE OCEANS.

TOGETHER AND WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME, WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE AND PREVENT HUMANITY, FROM IRREVERSIBLY DAMAGING THE OCEANS. ALL TOGETHER, WE CAN INVENT A NEW GROWTH MODEL WHICH WILL RECOGNIZE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE EXTRAORDINARY WEALTH OF THE OCEANS.

THE GREAT OCEANOGRAPHER AND FILM PRODUCER JACQUES-YVES COUSTEAU, WHO WAS ALSO THE DIRECTOR OF THE OCEANOGRAPHIC MUSEUM OF MONACO, ONCE SAID THAT "*PEOPLE PROTECT AND RESPECT WHAT THEY LOVE. AND TO MAKE THEM LOVE THE SEA THEY SHOULD BE FILLED WITH WONDER AS MUCH AS INFORMATION*".

I HOPE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO RISE TO THIS CHALLENGE, FOR WHICH PETER BENCHLEY IS BOTH A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND AN EXAMPLE.

THANK YOU.