

Ladies & gentlemen,

Friends,

The debates, presentations and discussions which have taken place here over the past few days have provided a perfect way of highlighting the dangers of climate warming and the pressing need for us to mobilise against its causes.

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We already know the rate at which these phenomena are occurring, the extent to which they are accelerating – posing increasingly tangible threats to our environment, our societies, our ways of life.

Our duty to anticipate future phenomena should not cause us to overlook the damage already caused to the planet, in such fragile regions as the Poles, in particular the Arctic. Although we hope to curb most of the threats raised here by drastically cutting our greenhouse gas emissions over the next twenty, thirty or forty years, I fear that the Arctic will not be able to hold on that long.

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Already it is experiencing the impact of warming twice as quickly as elsewhere. The melting of the ice reduces the reflection of the sun's rays, which in turn leads to the acceleration of warming. The resulting fresh water disrupts all of the marine currents, provoking large scale meteorological phenomena across the whole planet. The thawing of the permafrost will release new greenhouse gases which will themselves accelerate warming. And the resulting acidification of the oceans affects all of the chemical and biological balances of the globe's seas. As I highlighted in the Declaration of Monaco, published in January of this year by over 150 researchers of 26 different nationalities, acidification is currently ten to twenty times faster than predicted. The oceans' capacity to absorb CO₂ has been halved in ten years, leading in turn to the acceleration of global warming.

This is not an impending threat looming in 2030 or 2050. It is actually happening in 2009.

Although the Arctic ice plays an indispensable role in the climactic balance of the whole world, the Arctic has already become the first casualty of the warming of our planet.

Four million people live there. Their livelihood depends closely on their natural environment. Will we stand by and watch as they are sacrificed for the sake of our thoughtlessness and our selfishness?

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If we fail to take action to help them today, we will be powerless to act in self-preservation tomorrow, as the mechanisms that I have mentioned are accelerating at the expense of the balance of the whole planet. Once the glaciers have vanished, it will be too late for us all.

This is why the mobilisation of each and every one of us is necessary and urgent.

- That of the States directly involved, that we call on solemnly to take concerted action to preserve this heritage common to all humanity.

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- That of the other countries, which need to become aware of the impact of their actions on the Arctic ice.
- Last but not least, that of each and every one of us. We must learn to change our habits and models if we are to turn around the downwards spiral in which our entire planet is currently engaged.

Thank you.