

# Foreword

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**A**s is the case wherever the problem of environmental protection arises, the major issue for international negotiation is that of the interface between scientific research and policy making, and that was the case in Copenhagen. It is also that of the transformation of scientific truth into collective choice. Such transformation is never easy, nor natural.

Regardless of their accuracy, scientific facts cannot conceal the complexity of decisions that must include other issues and take into account other interests. This is why it is so important to be able to examine the case of the Antarctic Treaty, which is both exemplary and, alas, unique.

Fifty years ago when 12 countries decided to pool their efforts to preserve the Antarctic from all territorial claims, they probably had no idea of the meaning their action would take in light of the current situation. They could not imagine that saving our now endangered planet would become our main concern. They could not have known that the poles, until now the embodiment of the power of wilderness and wild expanses, would become the symbols of their new vulnerability. It is true that the Madrid Protocol provided a useful addition to the treaty in 1991, giving it an essential environmental dimension. In fact, all it did was reassert its original spirit, that of an area dependent on the shared responsibility of mankind, a continent whose collective importance requires defining the boundaries of special interests.

The spirit of the Antarctic Treaty Summit was to emphasize the primordial importance of these deserted expanses for mankind, expanses with almost no human beings but also without which all of us could no longer exist as we have so far. This is why I spoke of a case that is both exemplary and unique. The Antarctic Treaty political decision preceded scientific certainty; in a way, it even preceded the threat.

But beyond realities of its time, it also set out a universal philosophy for the preservation of higher interests of mankind. The treaty made it possible for nearly 10% of the Earth's surface to escape national interests and be dedicated to peaceful purposes. Given today's very different realities, this is the success that should inspire us. It will be difficult but not impossible since we have other assets, including the certainties acquired by scientists in the past 50 years. We

now know the challenge confronting us, what is at stake, our prime interests, our very survival. Threat and fear often trigger new momentum.

I was able and honored to go to Antarctica in January 2009, where I was able to visit 26 different research stations with dozens of researchers of different nationalities. I would like to pay tribute to their dedication, their passion, their selflessness. These men and women devote years of their lives trying to understand the complexities of our world. We must recognize today that their work is often insufficiently heeded by those who should be its natural extension, political decision makers. In recent decades scientists have been warning us of our planet's degradation, yet for decades our economies and short-term interests have been privileged. The international agenda is brimming with more urgent tragedies and crises with more immediate effects. Fortunately, things are beginning to change since scientists have succeeded in mobilizing increasingly vigilant public opinions. The world over, we can now see the emergence of renewed global awareness, our most valuable asset.

Regardless of the time it will take, we can now believe that progress will end up being the rule. We cannot afford, however, to lose too much time. We have already too long postponed making the right decisions to preserve the Earth and its resources and likely to guarantee a viable environment for future generations.

In Antarctica more than anywhere else we can observe the devastating effects of climate change year after year. The problem is all the more acutely felt in the Arctic as well, which does not benefit from any true protection by any treaty. Today, we can observe that the threats weighing on the Arctic no longer concern only degradation of the biotype. The strategic stakes are now very clear, and the ambitions are more and more openly voiced. Economic appetites are aroused, of course, by scientific estimations that one-fifth of the planet is still undiscovered, where technically exploitable energy resources are located in the Arctic zone. In addition to economic appetites there are often, unfortunately, strategic appetites. In the face of these threats we must take action. The importance of the resources at stake can only aggravate the situation in future years. This is why it is imperative for us to set up as soon as possible a lasting international solution taking into account everyone's interests. Everyone meaning not only the five states surrounding the Arctic Ocean and its shores, part of whose indigenous populations are seeing their traditional lifestyles profoundly disrupted, but also

the international community as a whole since, I repeat, the future of the Arctic is crucial for all of us.

Without any specific international treaty, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea serves as the basis for the protection of the Arctic. It is on this basis that all five of the coastal countries recently "agreed to take measures to ensure protection and conservation of the fragile marine environment of the Arctic Ocean." Can this statement weigh against the inexorable almost daily advance of the new conquerors of these icy expanses given the interests involved, their power and complexity? It is highly unlikely that any binding agreement can help move ahead in the coming years.

Thus, international negotiations cannot solve all problems. Although an effective global Arctic Treaty must remain our long-term objective, we must also explore parallel courses, short-term measures for good governance, less ambitious but just as necessary. In particular, we must envisage the creation of sanctuaries and protected areas for preserving biodiversity, including at sea, as has already been done, for example, by my country Monaco, France, and Italy in the Mediterranean with the Pelagos Sanctuary. This approach also applies to all phenomena linked to global warming, including the very important issue of acidification of the ocean and the threats against biodiversity. In the face of these challenges we must be flexible and inventive in combining different levels of actions that are both daring and complement each other. This is why it is so important for scientists to intensify their pressure. They represent a respected, independent moral force. Today, their voice is capable of going beyond specific interests and contingencies of topicality. While policy makers struggle to convert the conclusions of their work into appropriate choices, we must continue to rely on them so that we can reasonably triumph tomorrow.

As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared for the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, the challenges of the poles will offer nations the opportunity of meeting in the twenty-first century as we did 50 years ago in the twentieth century, to reinforce peace and security, encourage sustainable development, and protect the environment. These are very strong words that trace a course that is now our own. This is, at any rate, the way that I see my fight for the poles as a determinant focal point for the future of our world.

*Prince Albert II  
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