

13. A Message from the Prince of Monaco

Albert II

I would like to thank you for your dedication to addressing the crucial issue of plastic pollution. I highly value the expertise of the individuals gathered here, the excellence of the program to which you are all committed, and the remarkable work conducted by Boston College.

Four years ago, we organized a symposium in Monaco on the interactions between ocean pollution and human health, which I believe marked a significant milestone. I am pleased to acknowledge Professor Philip Landrigan, who led that event alongside our Scientific Center of Monaco. This is why I am thrilled that you are to continue this work and to tackle this sensitive and highly urgent issue.

There is no need to remind you of the issues—six billion tons of plastic already pollute our seas, with millions more added annually. This pollution is responsible for the deaths of one million birds and over 100,000 marine mammals every year. Moreover, as plastic decomposes into microparticles, it contaminates every ecosystem and the entire food chain right up to us humans.

Yet, solutions abound—whether technical or political—and we must all engage to implement them.

I am, of course, referring first of all to the ongoing UN negotiations aimed at creating a legally-binding instrument to regulate plastic throughout its entire life cycle. This treaty would represent a major step forward closely aligned with another urgent issue, the fight against fossil fuels—a leading cause of climate change. Rest assured, Monaco remains fully committed to supporting the highest ambitions in these treaty negotiations.

However, I am also referring to local actions such as those implemented by my government in Monaco. Although these efforts are spreading globally, their pace remains frustratingly slow. The expansion of waste

sorting, the promotion of recycling, the ban on single-use plastics, and the proliferation of support for alternative solutions, are tools readily available to us.

Finally, beyond these political initiatives, I would like to highlight the diversity, richness, and effectiveness of numerous actions undertaken by civil society, which are also developing worldwide. This is why through my foundation we launched the “BeMed Initiative” (*Beyond Plastics Med*) several years ago. BeMed supports innovative projects combating plastic pollution throughout the entire Mediterranean region. Since its inception, BeMed has supported nearly one hundred projects across fifteen different countries. Beyond financial aid, BeMed facilitates the sharing of experiences, the exchange of best practices, and the replication of effective measures, especially in avoiding plastic use.

All of these efforts demonstrate that action is both necessary and possible. Taking action, as you are doing today, has become a matter of the utmost urgency. Therefore, I can only encourage and commend you on this important initiative.



Albert II is the Prince of Monaco. He has reigned since 2005.