

Welcome address at the opening of the 3rd Meeting of the Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks

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Honorable delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Welcome to the Oceanographic Museum,

Presentation of the Institute of Oceanography

At the beginning of the 20th century, Prince Albert I denounced the harmful effects of overfishing and called for better regulation. Quote Albert I

"To stop this evil, I strongly suggest that international conferences are empowered with the necessary authority to enforce the decisions taken. »

Sharks were the first iconic animals we chose when we started working on programmes. Our programmes deal with iconic animals, which are as much ambassadors for the oceans as they are opportunities to examine the relationship between humans and the ocean.

Sharks symbolize our lack of understanding of the underwater world, which feeds on fear of the unknown. More than any other marine animal, they maintain a nefarious reputation, inspiring fear in many among those who know them the least and the fascination of the divers who come into contact them.

They also symbolize the hunger that can take hold of humans and be quickly devastating, as is the case of those large animals that dominated the oceans for millions of years before being decimated by a sudden craze for soup.

They symbolize the terrible mess to which this craze can lead, with the growth of finning which led to the rejection of more than 95% of the weight of sharks, when however their flesh, skin, liver oil or cartilage could also be exploited.

They are symbolic representatives of alpha predators, the top of the ocean's food chain, these regulators so important to the global balance of biodiversity.

Finally, and this brings us to this week's work, sharks embody these great migrants, these tireless travellers of the seas that know no borders. They enjoy the freedom of the seas, it seems and yet it is the absence of rules that has caused their downfall.

Sharks give us the scale to work on. They alone seem to justify regional cooperation that embraces their entire journey. They also determine the size of the marine protected areas that can support them, but also the coherence, the connectedness of MPA networks, giving meaning and urgency to the objectives set at Aichi.

Our programme has revealed that we have only just started to understand sharks and our knowledge remains far from perfect. Often, their life cycle retains shaded areas, such as the breeding grounds of great white sharks.

In recent years, as part of the *Explorations de Monaco*, we have been experimenting with different techniques that now allow us to get to know sharks better: satellite tracking, baited cameras, even environmental DNA. These are remarkable tools, but they still need to be more widely disseminated and, above all, data needs to be shared, because once again, the scale of sharks requires cooperation.

The same questions keep coming back to us: how many sharks are there in the ocean? How many are fished each year? It is difficult to say, especially since the problem lies in what by nature escapes the statistics: illegal, unreported fishing that weigh so heavily on sharks.

For all these reasons, the Institute of Oceanography appreciates the support that the Prince's Government has chosen to give to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks and thanks CMS and the Princely Government for having chosen the Oceanographic Museum to invite the 3rd meeting of the Signatories.

I will invite you to visit, during the week, our latest exhibition space, opened this summer, which is dedicated to Monaco and the Ocean. You will of course find there the sharks and Monaco's commitment on the subject, but also all the actions we can carry out, with the Government of the Principality and the Prince Albert II Foundation in particular, in a large number of areas that have in common the aim of building a more sustainable relationship between Man and the ocean.

I will conclude this welcome by quoting H.S.H. Prince Albert II, who had kindly provided the preface to our book on sharks, *Sharks beyond misunderstanding*:

"The threat to sharks today is a reflection of our globalized and complex world. Globalized because while fin consumption is concentrated in Asia, fishing and trade affect all oceans, all regions of the world. Complex because many phenomena combine: degradation of coastal environments, pollution, climate change, overfishing. [...]

Only a global leap forward can put an end to this frenzy, by using all the levers: fisheries management, trade transparency, consumer awareness... »