

HYDRO INTERNATIONAL INTERVIEWS ALBERT II, PRINCE OF MONACO

Following a Legacy



At the invitation of Prince Albert I, the Principality of Monaco has been the headquarters of the International Hydrographic Organization since 1921. Looking at the annual reports of the International Hydrographic Bureau, the Government of the Principality has always been generous with the

Organisation, providing it with beautiful premises and constant diplomatic support. Prince Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco since April 2005, continues the tradition of his predecessors. Since 2001, Prince Albert is also president of the International Commission for the Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean. He kindly accepted to be interviewed by Hydro international.

You were named after your great-great-grandfather, Prince Albert I, eminent oceanographer, who pro-moted the creation of the International Commission for the Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean (CIESM), founded Monaco's Oceanographic Museum and invited the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) to establish its headquarters in Monaco. We know that you too are firmly committed towards protecting the marine environment and ensuring its biodiversity. How do you intend to continue your ancestor's mission in the present geopolitical environment?

By creating the Oceanographic Institute and Oceanographic Museum under the Prince Albert I Foundation, my great-great-grandfather had wanted to organise around him the oceanographic scientific community of that time, to display the fruit of his research work and expeditions, and to establish the oceanographic museum in Monaco, which is a leading establishment in this domain. Moreover, following the Washington Conference in 1899 and the St Petersburg Conference in 1912, at his invitation, international hydrographic co-operation had its own permanent body in the form of an International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB).

In 1970, the legal status of the Organisation changed and it became the IHO. Its headquarters, the IHB, are permanently established here in Monaco. The objective of the IHO is technical: co-ordination of the activities of the national hydrographic services, standardisation of nautical charts and documents, etc. Although it is true that the protection of the environment comes more directly under the responsibility of other organisations such as, for example, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), whose conference was hosted in Monaco last year, the IHO also plays a specific role as regards the knowledge and protection of the seas and oceans.

Prince Albert I thus left us a remark-able scientific legacy. I consider it my duty to further develop this legacy, evidently in a different context a century later. In a hundred years, the sea has sadly become the dumping ground for much pollution. The phenomenon of climatic warming is a new subject with its impacts - repercussions of the melting ice cap, rise in sea level along certain coasts - affecting the physical and biological state of the seas. Added to this are the changes in fishing resources, the threats that are endangering certain species, etc. At the same time, the awareness of these developments and risks is growing, which is an excellent reason to hope for the future.

Recently in the space of a few days, I participated in the Istanbul Water Forum, followed by the Paris Forum 'Save the

Mediterranean', before concluding in Monaco at a seminar on fresh water in the Mediterranean basin. My role is to alert and raise public awareness at all these meetings.

Did Your Serene Highness undertake the expeditions to the North Pole in April 2006 and to Antarctica in 2009 to prove this commitment? Can you briefly describe your impressions of those experiences?

In going to the North Pole in April 2006, I followed in my great-great-grandfather's footsteps.

I wanted to compare the observations that were made at the time with today's situation, and in particular to compare the results of certain samples. The conclusion is clear and only confirms how urgently we need to react.

In January 2009, I travelled to the Antarctic, where I visited the scientific bases set up by numerous countries. The scientists work in extreme conditions and are isolated from the rest of the world. They are the attentive observers of the climate changes that also affect these zones and that result in a chain of consequences in other regions of the globe.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover the human experience that these teams encounter, these teams who are both very united and very open to all people who show a scientific interest in their investigations.

We know that the Government of Monaco is very supportive of the IHO. When opening the second IHO Extraordinary Conference in the year 2000 in your capacity of Hereditary Prince, you accepted the invitation of the president of the IHB to be the ambassador for hydrography in your visits to coastal states. Can you describe your experience of being an ambassador?

My visits to coastal states give me the opportunity to remind countries that the IHO is an institution that contributes to rendering navigation easier and safer by improving and standardising nautical charts and documents. A Directing Committee, composed of experts in hydrography and nautical charting, co-ordinates the technical programmes and provides advice and assistance to Member States.

During the past decades, important factors have highlighted the need for adequate hydrographic coverage, as well as the production of charts and nautical publications, which are as follows:

- the need to protect the marine environment
- fluctuating maritime commerce
- the growing importance of seabed resources
- the impact on the zones of national jurisdiction under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In recent years, climatic change has affected the physical and biological status of the seas. Scientific organisations are monitoring these changes. How do you see the role of the IHO in carrying out this task?

The IHO's primary task is hydrography, which is the measurement and description of the shape of the sea bottom and coastal zones. The IHO can mobilise its efforts through its Member States, which are equipped with hydrographic vessels, hydrographic launches, helicopters and aircraft equipped with laser hydrographic equipment, etc. The Organisation is therefore well placed to assess the extent of the impact of climate change on the oceans and seas.

The IHO can act as a guard. For instance, the Tide and Water Level Working Group - formerly the Tidal Committee - will be paying close attention to the rise in sea level due to climatic warming, as announced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Finally, liaison is always possible between the IHO and the Marine Environmental Laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Monaco.

The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) was developed by Prince Albert I and is now under the responsibility of the IHO and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). In 2003, its centenary was celebrated in Monaco by the IHO and IOC in your presence. How will GEBCO support international efforts for studies on climate change and the protection of the marine environment?

Even if the IHO's role, bearing in mind its specialised objective, is not, a priori, to study climate change, its activities are very useful to all of those bodies who are concerned with this issue. Thus, GEBCO, placed under its authority, is the foundation stone for all work concerning the protection of the marine environment. This is the reason why the IHO closely co-operates with those international organisations dealing with this question: the International Maritime Organization (IMO), UNESCO's IOC, International Association of Lighthouse Authorities, etc. Moreover, the Organisation contributes to the development of scientific

knowledge on the oceanographic environment. All the data that the IHO collects are made available to these organisations, and, in doing this, the IHO provides essential support to the international effort devoted to the study of climate change.

At the XVIIth International Hydrographic Conference, the IHO decided to devote its 4th Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference, which is to be held in Monaco from 2 to 4 June 2009, to the protection of the marine environment.

How does Monaco participate in United Nations (UN) efforts and developments to combat the factors that affect climate change and to protect the marine environment? Globally, what are your personal initiatives on this issue?

The Principality of Monaco, which makes every effort to actively participate in UN meetings on climate change and the protection of the environment, has not failed to support the resolutions voted by the UN General Assembly to reinforce safety at sea and the protection of the marine environment. Monaco has ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climatic Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

By ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, Monaco has committed itself, as have other countries, to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 8% over the period 2008-2012 compared with the reference year 1990.

Since the year 2000, the levels of emissions recorded on the national territory are continually decreasing. The last available data placed the levels in 2007 at 13% below 1990 levels. The efforts made to reduce gas emissions at a national level are also made at an international level, such as supporting the certification of a Mediterranean project for the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol.

Furthermore, Monaco has voluntarily made a commitment to become carbon neutral by becoming the 5th Member State of the UNEP Climate Neutral Network. Thus, Monaco will reduce its emissions by 20% in 2020 and by 60% in 2050. The residual domestic gas emissions will be compensated by financing projects to reduce gas emissions for the benefit of the most deprived populations in face of climate change. My Government participates in the work carried out in this frame or in the work undertaken by various organisations such as the IOC, IMO, etc.

Finally, the protection and enhancement of natural resources are part of my country's four priority domains of international co-operation, led by the Directorate of International Cooperation, including in particular the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity. Furthermore, my Government, at my request, has put into operation an ambitious policy not only in terms of energy saving, development of public transport, and using renewable energies, but also raising public awareness, particularly amongst the younger members of the population.

The fact that, a short time after my accession to the throne, I created a foundation that bears my name is really so that, in parallel and on top of the Government's efforts, my own personal commitment in this domain is clear.

On 13 July 2008, during the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, the Euro-Mediterranean heads of state and government, under the initiative of the President of France, adopted a joint declaration aimed at revitalising the 1995 Barcelona Process. The initiative is now called "The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean". How do you see the role of hydrography in that Process?

The Principality of Monaco is one of the 43 founding members of the Union for the Mediterranean (UpM in French), which was created on 13 July 2008. At the summit for the Mediterranean in Paris, the heads of state and government recognised that water is one of the major issues of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, in many aspects: protection of hydric resources, diversification of water supply resources, rational and sustainable use of water and the cleaning up of the Mediterranean.

Hydrography will play an essential role in the drawing up of plans of action and strategies concerning water. Indeed, at the ministerial meeting on water that was held in Jordan on 22 December 2008, the 43 Euro-Mediterranean members recognised the need to draw up and implement strategies and plans to achieve a sustainable management of water resources through integrated approaches covering all types of resources and their uses.

For this, they agreed it was essential to draw up a complete and detailed assessment of water resources and the management policies in the Mediterranean, based on standardised and consistent information. The ministers have thus called for increased co-ordination between existing Euro-Mediterranean efforts and networks in terms of information and expertise, planning and monitoring of policies, as well as capacity building, so as to increase the effectiveness of the efforts in hand. Hydrography is thus going to be in great demand by the authorities of the Euro-Mediterranean members and will be an essential tool in drawing up a Mediterranean water strategy that should be adopted in 2010.

How do you evaluate the presence of the IHO in Monaco?

The IHO is a consultative and technical intergovernmental organisation established in 1921 with 19 Member States, to promote safety at sea and the protection of the marine environment. At present, the IHO has 80 Member States. The headquarters of the Organisation was established in Monaco at the invitation of Prince Albert I. The Host Agreement was signed on 10 August 1978 in Monaco, by the minister of state and the president of the Directing Committee of the IHB.

Official government representatives meet every five years for a conference in Monaco that studies the progress achieved by the Organisation and adopts the work programme for the next five years. The Bureau - the secretariat of the Organisation - is run by a Directing Committee composed of three senior hydrographers elected to manage the Bureau's activities over this period. The Directing Committee is assisted by professional assistants, administrative, technical and general service staff.

The Bureau is responsible for carrying out the tasks assigned by the Convention or the Conference and in particular:

- to maintain permanent and close contact with the national hydrographic services
- to disseminate all useful documentation
- to give expert advice when requested
- to encourage the co-ordination of hydrographic surveys in the interest of mariners
- to develop and facilitate the application of oceanographic knowledge in the interest of mariners
- to co-operate with international organisations and scientific institutions that have similar objectives.

The IHO is therefore naturally linked to Monaco due to the constant interest shown by my country in the oceanographic sciences.

The Princes (of Monaco) have always participated in the past in the International Hydrographic Conferences and I will preside the Opening Ceremony of the 4th Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference on 2 June 2009. My Government has always made a point of marking its attachment to this Organisation established on its territory, by regularly nominating a candidate to be a member of the various internal IHO bodies. Thus, a senior civil servant from my Government who is the *Contrôleur général des Dépenses* is the current chairman of the IHO Finance Committee; similarly a civil servant from the Department of External Relations is a member of the IHO's Legal Advisory Committee.

Finally, as the host country to the Organisation's headquarters and, more importantly, as the Depositary State of the IHO Convention, the Principality of Monaco, through its External Relations Department, carries out the administrative and diplomatic tasks that fall under its responsibility. ü

Acknowledgement

Thanks are due to the IHB Directing Committee, in particular to Barbara Williams.

Email: nbas...@palais.mc

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/article/following-a-legacy>
