

**Speech by President Gordana Siljanovska Davkova
at the Third United Nations Ocean Conference – UNOC3,
Nice, 9 June 2025**

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Co-Chairs, the Presidents of France and of Costa Rica for organizing this third United Nations Ocean Conference.

As a member of a given society, each one of us is part of what Rousseau called a social contract. However, we have gathered here, in Nice, as party of another contract, Michel Serres' natural contract that obliges people to treat the planet as an equal partner. And, I dare say, that we stand here on trial, as the guilty party that broke that very natural contract.

The ocean is the blue heart of our blue planet. For billions of years, this blue heart has been beating in a rhythm that has sustained life for countless species, including our own. As the heart of the global climate system, the ocean is absorbing a quarter of CO₂ emissions and is providing half of the oxygen needed on Earth. It cools the planet by absorbing 90% of the heat and regulates the climate. It is essential for food security. Life above sea level depends on life below sea level.

However, with our unsustainable production systems and wasteful consumerist habits, we are disrupting the oceanic system. The evidence against us is all around us.

The ocean has become warmer and more acidic. Its primeval currents are being altered, making the sea more unpredictable. Its vivid corals are bleached and rich marine ecosystems devastated. We have added pesticides and plastic to the food chain, disrupting intricate biochemical processes in living organisms.

Blinded by short-term profit, we gamble the livelihood of future generations. Think of the rising temperatures, the ever more frequent extreme weather events, and the micro plastic that ends up on our plates.

In order to deal with this crisis, we need effective multilateralism with a strong United Nations in its center. The UN exists to build peace not only among nations, but also with nature. No single country, no single continent, can achieve this alone. It is a joint effort by the whole of humanity, of all nations, large and small, coastal and landlocked. Especially landlocked, not only because we have the legal right of access to the sea (under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea), but because we are part of the same oceanic system.

Excellencies,

My country advocates for strong international ocean governance and dialogue. We welcome the declaration "Our Ocean, our future: united for urgent action" and we support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the Nice Action Plan. Today I will sign the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. And, we also support the full implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to halt biodiversity loss. We welcome ambitious action to protect, conserve, sustainably use and restore the ocean and its ecosystems in line with the Pact for the Future.

However, our greatest contribution is related to tackling climate change. As a signatory of the Paris Agreement, we have pledged to significantly reduce green house gas emissions, to accelerate the transition to low-carbon economy in energy, transport, industry, and agriculture. As we're in the Mediterranean, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions, we prioritize adapting our most vulnerable sectors, especially water resources. However, this process will be much more efficient if our EU accession process is deblocked. By fighting climate change, we fight for the ocean.

We need what Edgar Morin called an earth consciousness, a deep awareness of our interconnectedness as a single planetary community. We see signs of this as young generations everywhere are becoming more aware of the ocean crisis, including in my landlocked country. Recently, I met a group of young, bright Macedonian students who won the First Lego League Challenge, supported by UNESCO, with an innovative solution on how to use robotics to clean the oceans and feed the whales. Imagine, students from a landlocked country are passionate about saving the ocean.

I said that we are on trial. The ocean floor is littered with evidence that prove our guilt. A future captain Nemo, might collect them and convict us for breaching the natural contract. But, in order to attain a more favorable verdict by future generations, we need to replace Dorian Gray's narcissistic mirror with the mirror of nature. As the legend of oceanography Jacques Cousteau once said, "the sea, the great unifier, is man's only hope. Now, as never before, the old phrase has a literal meaning: we are all in the same boat."

Thank you.