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PRESS RELEASE

The international conference on “The Arctic: an observatory for environmental change” on 9 and 10 November, jointly organised by the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the Principality of Monaco, brought together ministers and politicians of European countries, countries of the Arctic council and countries conducting scientific research in the Arctic, scientific experts, representatives of European institutions and of international organisations.

Under the auspices of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, **Jean-Louis Borloo**, the French Minister of State, Minister for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Regional Planning, has made climate change a main priority. The Arctic region is key to our understanding of the climate. Its protection is a commitment of the Grenelle Environment Forum. ***“The Arctic is a witness to and a victim of all types of pollution. We will never be able to thank the international scientific community enough for these 30 years of research on ice sheets and Arctic and Antarctic glaciers, which has scientifically and undeniably demonstrated a fundamental reality: the concentration of methane and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has never been so high as it is today”***, declared Mr Borloo.

HRH Prince Albert II of Monaco added: “Faced with these potential risks, we have to act. The importance of the resources at play will only make the situation worse in the years to come. This is why a lasting international solution taking everyone’s interests into account must be found as soon as possible.”

During the conference, scientific experts reiterated their concerns about the latest regional effects of the melting of the summer ice pack and the global impact of these changes, in particular the consequences of rising sea levels.

The conference participants reaffirmed the need to take collective action to address these challenges and applauded the results of international scientific cooperation during the International Polar Year, which were presented at the conference, and called for this work to be expanded and developed further.

The objective is to work to establish a co-ordination framework to harmonise and optimise scientific observations collected in the Arctic, based on the recommendations of the Arctic Council and the impetus launched by the European Polar Consortium. All the actors recognised the essential contribution of research and long-term monitoring for understanding and predicting the evolution of the Arctic environment and climate, including the impact on biodiversity and the spread of and contamination by chemical products, thus providing more complete information to guide political decision-making at national and international levels.

The ministers and representatives of the European institutions and international organisations present in Monaco adopted a final declaration in which they committed to advance these ambitions within regional and international bodies.

“The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union will ensure the promotion of this initiative and will hand it over to the Czech and Swedish presidencies within the framework of the work programme of the three presidencies of the Council of the European Union (second half of 2008 to end 2009”, concluded Jean-Louis Borloo.

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