Salutació en Català

- Dr. Earle, dear colleague
- Alcaldessa de Vilanova i la Geltrú
- Diputat del Parlament de Catalunya
- Director General de Política Marítima
- Regidores i regidors
- Estudiantat de Vilanova que avui ens acompanyeu
- Rectors UPC
- Membres de la comunitat UPC
- Amigues i amics

Benvolguts, benvolgudes,

És un honor per la nostra institució, i per a mi en particular, poder celebrar avui la cerimònia d’investidura de la doctora Sylvia Earle com a doctora honoris causa de la Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.

I és també un honor, un plaer i un orgull, fer-ho a Vilanova i la Geltrú, i voldria agrair a l’ajuntament les facilitats que ens han posat per fer possible aquest acte en aquest magnífic Teatre Principal.

Vilanova i la Geltrú és el que ens agrada dir “una ciutat UPC” (a més de molts altres atributs que salten a la vista).

Acull una de les nostres escoles més emblemàtiques: l’Escola Politècnica Superior d’Enginyeria de Vilanova i la Geltrú (EPSEVG). Una escola fundada al trencant del segle XIX amb el XX i que des de llavors ha acompanyat el desenvolupament econòmic i social d’un territori, d’un país, que ha vist en el
Dear Dr. Earle, welcome to Vilanova i la Geltrú, welcome to the UPC.

As I was pointing out, Vilanova i la Geltrú is a fascinating city in which UPC has been located since the beginning of the twentieth century, working together with a huge diversity of partners that have made possible what it is this city, this region: a prosperous and gentle place to live and to develop exciting projects.

As you highlighted in your speech, Science has a vocation to serve, and so does the UPC. Since the very beginning of the creation of our institution, fulfilling society’s needs has been a goal. We did it when we were born near the factories, next to the rivers, along Catalonia.

We tried to serve, for example, some months ago, and are still doing it, tracking the evolution of the COVID disease among the population or providing innovative solutions to overcome the effects of pandemics on society.

We will keep doing it in the near future to overcome the many threats and challenges society must face.

The power of science put into action, well directed towards the goals of sustainable development is very strong. Serving the larger goal of planetary biodiversity and, consequently, human survival, is the best contribution science can make in these difficult times when so much is at stake.
We at the UPC are optimistic by nature. We agree that even though we can not foresee how the future will look like, optimism is a good strategy to face it. Because if we don't believe a better future is possible, we are unlikely to take responsibility for building it.

However, our optimism is far from naivety. We scientists know more than anyone how much work is needed to achieve significant progress resulting in a turning point of the actual situation.

But let's be clear, what we are facing now is the result of two catastrophic forces: human action and human inaction.

At this point, when the goal seems too far to reach, and the forces acting too strong to overcome, Dr. Earle’s example and determination comes up as an inspiration for all of us. She has never given up, she reminds us there is still hope. “But not so much”, she also quotes.

Higher education institutions and research centers have therefore the obligation to contribute to support and enhance this hope. And universities such as UPC have the most powerful tool: Education.

With our action educating new generations into science and technology we aim to be the cradle of many scientists, future or actual students. But not only scientists, as most of our students will work as engineers in both the private and the public sectors. Scientists will pave new ways, but with their daily decisions engineers will shape the world. It is our responsibility to provide them with both knowledge and values. Ethically
driven education, aligned with the SDG, comes up now as critical.

Education is thus the root of the commitment of UPC with the oceans. UPC lead a first Doctorate Program in Marine Science in Catalonia more than 35 years ago. At that time, UPC worked together with other universities (Universitat de Barcelona) and research centers on Marine Science in Catalonia (Institut de Ciències del Mar, among others) to build up a proposal base on the multidisciplinarity needed to approach the complex challenges related to marine environment.

So far, UPC has contributed actively by educating our future engineers and scientists at all levels (bachelor, master and PhD) on Marine Science and Technology.

Tenim el plaer d’acollir avui un grup de joves estudiants dels instituts de Vilanova i molts altres ens estan mirant per internet. Benvinguts a tots vosaltres. Esteu cridats a ser qui marcarà la diferència. Potser a Vilanova o no molt lluny, ajudant a atendre la protecció de la biodiversitat tant a la mar com a la terra. Potser a l'altra punta del món, on calgui, liderant i participant en projectes engrescadors.

Quan un és jove no coneix quin és el seu potencial. Però hem de tenir present que tots els grans homes de ciència, els grans pensadors i els enginyers que han donat forma al món van ser en el seu joves que no sospitaven quina seria la seva aportació a la societat. Us animo, doncs a no posar-vos límits, a gaudir del plaer de l’estudi i a treballar en allò que realment us ompli. No hi ha major felicitat que convertir la teva vocació en la teva feina diària.
Not less important is research. More than ever, technical universities need to be aligned with SDG and contribute to increase the impact of the projects related to sustainability and the preservation of biodiversity.

The number of research projects linked to these areas has increased significantly in recent years at the UPC. Research at UPC related to many different topics related to the sea, as oceanography, renewable energies, marine data collection and processing, beach protection, robotics, ship construction including its decarbonization, impact of climate change, acoustic impact on the ecosystem, low impact aquaculture and algae production, among many others, is recognized national and internationally as a driving force for the marine protection and for its capacity to provide solutions that we all need to protect our oceans and its biodiversity, and so, to protect our future as humanity.

As a relevant example, here in Vilanova we host one of the most important scientific units regarding technology for biodiversity: the LAB (Bioacustic Applications Laboratory), which is probably better known beyond our borders than in our country. Or the multidisciplinary task force working in the ProvidenceX project, competing in the Google X Prize, providing solutions to analyze the quantity and quality of biodiversity in such fragile habitats like tropical rainforests.

These projects and other being developed throughout UPC make us feel confident of our potential to provide solutions in the near future.

The importance of the goal needs strong and wide alliances. That’s why we need to increase the shared projects involving
universities, research institutions, public administrations as well as civil society. Together we need to create not only long-term projects but a new state of mind that helps them to create impact and results.

We would like our university to be considered by the Catalan government as a reference university in the field of technological solutions for biodiversity. We want to continue developing our commitment to the country, especially in the big challenges. And the sea, our coast, the protection of marine biodiversity is undoubtedly one of the most important challenges we have to face.

Having said that, the strategy of leaving everything in the hands of science as if it had the ability to fix all the disasters that we as humanity are creating every day is absurd to say the least.

There is no technology capable of reversing the consequences of our actions on the Earth's ecosystems if we do not first change the way we interact with them. This one is the real transformation: to change the way we interact with our planet.

In fact, knowledge plays an important role in this transformation. The more we know about the world, the more it changes our way of approaching it. Clearly we need to know, to understand, and to establish a closer relationship with ecosystems and planetary biodiversity.

Dr. Earle statements inspires once again:

“With knowing comes caring
With caring there is hope”
This is why the dissemination of science and the values of sustainability are so important. In the coming years we will have to combine the commitment to science with enormous efforts to communicate and disseminate knowledge. We need to foster a “global consciousness” of action.

Someone could think that the process to create a “global consciousness” is too slow considering the speed of changes planet Earth is suffering. And maybe too risky to become a “global conscious-mess” if we just wait for it.

Probably we should appeal to our survival instinct and put it into action. Once again, Dr. Earle inspires us with a worldwide known aphorism

“No water, no life, no blue, no green”.

“No Ocean, No us”

Thank you Dr. Earle for your work, for your example and inspiration

Per questes raons, i per moltes més, la Dra. Sylvia Earle encarna els valors que ens han de guiar en els propers anys.

Abans de cloure aquestes paraules, m’agradaria agrair a les persones que han ajudat a que aquest acte sigui possible.

- L’escola i les persones que van proposar aquesta candidatura
- La Coral de Vilanova i els músics que ens han fet gaudir.
Thank you very much Dr. Earle to accept this honor, and to inspire us in our environmental commitments.

Moltes gràcies Excel.lentíssima senyora Sylvia Earle, estimada col.lega.

Welcome to our fellowship. You are now part of this community. This is your home. Please feel like it.

Moltes gràcies!