



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

PRESS RELEASE

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A Global Island Partnership launched by the President of Palau at the Curitiba Biodiversity Conference

Curitiba, 29 March 2006 - At the Biodiversity global conference being held in Curitiba, Brazil with the participation of 122 ministers and 4000 delegates, the President of Palau, the President of Indonesia, the Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia, Grenada and Kiribati launched the "Global Island Partnership" aimed at enhancing marine and terrestrial protected areas as a major contribution of achieving the Heads of State commitment to reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

The 100,000 islands of the world represent more than 600 million people, one quarter of the nations of the world, 16% of the planet's known plant species and more than half of the world's tropical marine biodiversity. 30% of the world's coral reefs are severely damaged and 60% may be lost by 2030. Half of the species of the world lost have been island species. "To address the islands unique challenges we need a unique approach and unique response. The Micronesia challenge is our shared response" said the Honourable Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., the President of Palau.

The "Micronesia Challenge" commits at least 30% of the marine areas and 20% of the forests of the countries across Micronesia. The effective conservation represents more than 20% of the Pacific island region and will protect 10% of the global reef area and 462 coral species representing 58% of all known corals.

A similar commitment was made by Grenada and Indonesia. The Minister of Kiribati announced the establishment of the Phoenix Islands Protected area, as a national park. This will lead to the largest marine protected area in the Pacific Islands, an area twice the size of Portugal.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on all life on earth, said "the establishment of land based protected areas has been one of the great environmental success stories for the conservation of nature. Since the establishment of Yellow Stone National Park in the United States of America over 100 years ago, the number of such areas has increased to more than 11% of the Earth's surface".

"However, the development of marine protected areas has lagged far behind. Indeed, less than one percent of the World's oceans and seas benefit from marine protected area states" he added.

"The tragedy of the tsunami of December 2004 in the Indian Ocean underlined that ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves are not only vital nurseries for fish and other marine life forms, they are also vital natural sea defenses, able to protect coastal communities, their properties and their rich coastal biodiversity".

“So I applaud these commitments for protecting life on earth and call on Heads of State of the World to seize the opportunity of the ninth Conference of Parties to be held in 2008 in Germany to follow suit and make concrete commitments for achieving this promise to reverse biodiversity loss by 2010” he concluded.

Notes to Editors.

The 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 8) is taking place in Curitiba, Brazil, from 20 to 31 March. www.biodiv.org

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