

## PRESS RELEASE: Islands show the way to conserve nature

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“Islands are showing the way to conserve nature and achieve sustainable livelihoods,” stated Seychelles’ Minister for Environment & Energy, Dr. Rolph Payet during Island Innovations, a dynamic high level event held during United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties in Hyderabad, India.

The event, co-hosted by Seychelles and India, demonstrated how islands are demonstrating global leadership and rapid progress in addressing environmental and poverty challenges. They are also inspiring others around the world by implementing a variety of successful large-scale initiatives including world-class marine protected areas, multi-country conservation commitments, progressive biosecurity planning and innovative financing mechanisms to support these programs.

Island ecosystems are critical to the health of the world. The earth’s 175,000 plus islands are home to 600million plus people and support 20% of global biodiversity, including a huge number of species found nowhere else. The increasing challenges facing islands are massive, threatening the very existence of some islands. Yet islands are taking action and making progress to conserve their unique and invaluable environments.

Island Innovations showcased the leadership and commitment to action of island countries and countries with islands to developing solutions to these challenges. A range of new and significant commitments to conserve nature were announced during the event:

- The **Caribbean Biodiversity Fund**, the first regional endowment to be developed in the world to support multiple national level conservation Trust Funds was launched by Grenada’s Multilateral Environmental Agreement Ambassador Dr. Spencer Thomas on behalf of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative countries along with Peter Hilliges, Director Natural Resources Sector for Latin America and the Caribbean for the German development bank (KfW), and Robert Weary, Director of Conservation Finance for The Nature Conservancy. US\$30million has already been committed to this Fund towards an initial target of US\$40million by the Government of Germany, The Nature Conservancy, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Once the target is reached it will provide US\$2 million per year in critical sustainable financing to Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines to support these Caribbean Challenge Initiative countries to protect nature.
- **Deputy Premier of the British Virgin Islands (BVI)**, The Honorable Dr. Kedrick Pickering announced that BVI will co-host a Caribbean Political and Business Leaders Summit with Sir Richard Branson of the Virgin Group and the Prime Minister of Grenada in 2013 as part of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative. The Summit will build on the visionary commitments of Caribbean Challenge countries to protect near shore marine areas by 2020 and in developing sustainable finance mechanisms to support these goals.

- **Republic of the Marshall Islands Minister in Assistance to the President**, The Honorable Tony de Brum focused on the progress made in achieving the goals of the Micronesia Challenge to effectively conserve at least 30% of the near-shore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020.
- **New Caledonia's Member of the European Parliament**, The Honorable M. Maurice Ponga, announced that the European Parliament will support a third phase European Union funding of 2million Euros under the Voluntary Scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services in Territories of European Overseas (BEST) and push to better integrate EU overseas biodiversity conservation and resource management in EU policies.
- **The Chair of Hawai'i's Department of Land & Natural Resources, USA**, William Aila showcased the states innovative approach to achieving a green economy by bringing together Hawai'i leaders from energy, food and the environment together as part of the Hawai'i Green Growth Initiative to achieve Hawai'i's sustainability goals and be a model for integrated green growth. "As islands, we understand that these challenges are linked, and we must solve them together. Our economic future depends on caring for our environment mauka to makai."
- **Ecuador's Director of the Galapagos National Park**, Edwin Naula, announced the recent creation of the Galapagos Invasive Species Endowment' which currently is generating around UD\$925,000 for managing invasive species in the archipelago.
- **United Nations Development Programme Associate Administrator**, Rebecca Grynspan, announced that UNDP will be increasing support to islands and Dr. Naoko Ishii was welcomed as the new CEO and Director of **The Global Environment Facility**.

Palau was recognized for their global leadership in marine policy in establishing Palau's Protected Areas Network Act, initiated in 2003, and the Shark Haven Act from 2009 which resulted in Palau being the winner of the Future Policy Award 2012.

"Islands are working together, getting results and showing the way to achieve the Aichi targets," stated Dr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, **Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**, "but further action is urgently needed to conserve and protect the unique island ecosystems and surrounding seas."

Minister Payet reinforced this statement affirming, "The time for action is now. We must continue to take leadership, to make visionary commitments and ensure these commitments are implemented on the ground. We must scale up the bright spots emerging from islands and invest in what works. We must continue to work together as a Global Island Partnership."

The Global Island Partnership is co-chaired by the Presidents of Seychelles and Palau and Prime Minister of Grenada to promote action for island conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Island Innovations was coordinated by the Global Island Partnership and Rare with the support of the Japan Biodiversity Fund, the Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) through the BEST Preparatory Action and the ISLANDS Project funded by European Union through the Indian Ocean Commission.



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**SEE PHOTOS ATTACHED:**

- Dr. Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary for the CBD is greeted by Seychelles' Minister for Environment & Energy, Dr. Rolph Payet
- Island delegates from Fiji, Kiribati and Republic of Marshall Islands enjoy the evening's program