

A new Global Island Partnership commitment

Rome, Italy. President Michel of the Seychelles launched the Sea Level Rise Foundation at the opening of the Global Island Partnership's Strategy Meeting in Rome. The President called for global attention and action to address the devastating impacts of climate change on our vulnerable island people and ecosystems. This Foundation will provide a mechanism for leveraging attention and focus on these impacts on Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Sea-level rise as a result of climate change is a critical issue facing small island states. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the effects are already being felt. The Sea Level Rise Foundation will bring resources and expertise together to support small island states, islands and other low-lying areas in adapting to this threat.

The Foundation will have three main roles: It will bring together countries, scientists, policy-makers and other stakeholders to share ideas, technologies and know-how; it will provide a platform for public-private partnerships and mainstream sea-level rise proofing guidance to government and developers alike; and it will raise resources required to engage all nations in avoiding the first climate refugees, those living on islands and in low-lying areas.

The Sea Level Rise Foundation will be part of the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) - an innovative partnership led by island leaders, organizations and donor agencies that is committed to helping islands around the world advance island conservation and sustainable livelihoods. This Partnership, called for by the Presidents of Palau and the Seychelles at the Mauritius International Meeting in 2005, has grown rapidly to help achieve the vision of increased leadership by small island states in determining their own future.

Since 2005, GLISPA has engaged more than 20 countries and territories and 20 agencies and organisations worldwide in high level commitments and on the ground action for island conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. GLISPA has also been instrumental in helping to secure more than 30 million USD in commitments for island conservation.

The Micronesia Challenge was one of the earliest GLISPA commitments. The Chief Executives of five Micronesian governments: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Republic of Palau, U.S. Territory of Guam and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), committed to effectively conserve by 2020 at least 30% of the near-shore marine resources and 20% of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia.

The Micronesia Challenge inspired the government of Grenada to announce its intention to: "protect 25% of its marine and terrestrial area by 2020". It was joined by the Bahamas, thereby launching the Caribbean Challenge. To date, all nine members in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have adopted the Caribbean Challenge in principle, and much work is underway in the field and cabinet level of governments to advance this collaborative initiative.

In 2006, GLISPA and the Micronesia Challenge inspired Indonesia's President Yudhoyono to reach out to neighbouring countries to work together to protect the heart of coral diversity in the world, the Coral Triangle. Five island nations and one nation with islands formed a partnership to protect the world's most biologically diverse marine area, known as the Amazon of the seas, from the destructive impacts of climate change, unsustainable fishing and land-based pollution. The Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) will seek to conserve and better manage coral reefs, promote sustainable fishing and ensure food security in an area encompassing central Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

As the challenges facing islands become more critical, a renewed approach by the Global Island Partnership to focus on future strategic directions and how to improve impact locally and globally is required. The 3 day meeting in Rome will strengthen the partnership to address these emerging challenges.

For more information:

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