

Mr. Zoran Šikić
State Secretary for Nature Conservation in the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia

Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, and Executive Secretary, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Republic of Croatia, I would like to thank you for invitation of Croatia, as a nation with 1185 islands, to the GLISPA Partnership.

In Croatia, protected areas cover almost 12% of territory; additionally Croatia has designated almost 47% of our territory under National Ecological Network, as an effort to establish ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected areas. It remains to insure comprehensive and effective management through implementation of the Programme of work on protected areas by 2010 for terrestrial and by 2012 for marine areas.

Croatia is continuing cooperation in the region; stimulating new ideas and projects, implementing European and global experiences – as a good example, we can mention “Dinaric Arc Ecoregion” project, supported by international non-governmental organizations, where joint and coordinated efforts are recognized as need in efficient transboundary cooperation with the aim to contribute to biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods.

Croatia is considered as small country, but having 1185 islands, binds us to remain islands biodiversity and marine ecosystems as issues of high importance for the Republic of Croatia. Again, we would like to stress similarity in the conservation goals of the small islands developing states and nations with many islands. In order to meet requirements of Heads of the States made during the WSSD held in Johannesburg 2002, Croatia is working on establishment and improvement of marine protected areas system by 2012, again with support of national and international non-governmental organizations and other institutions.

As the signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Government of the Republic of Croatia recognizes the importance of efficient delivery of the CBD Programmes in relation to marine protected areas and initiatives for island, we believe our commitments will contribute to the implementation of Programmes of Work on Island Biodiversity and Protected Areas.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, as competent for Nature Protection, will continue to work towards:

1. Developing Management Plans for 5 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): National Parks of Brijuni, Kornati and Mljet, Nature Parks of Telašćica and Lastovo Archipelago by 2012
2. Strengthening capacities of the 5 Croatian MPAs management bodies on issues related to MPA management, also, including some of marine protected areas at the SPAMI List
3. Improvement of a system of effectively managed and representative network of MPAs in the Mediterranean by 2012
4. Strengthening institutions at national and regional levels, through assessing protected areas management effectiveness (RAPPAM)
5. Ensuring stakeholder participation in management planning of protected areas based on the model successfully implemented in the Karst Ecosystem Conservation Project (for 5 parks in karst region)
6. Creation of a functional ecological network - system of protected areas and corridors in marine and coastal habitats (Natura 2000 marine sites comprehensive to existing sites of national ecological network)

Finally, I wish to thank sincerely all those involved in the preparatory work for GLISPA in the last intersessional period, and to thank you for recognizing Croatia as a GLISPA partner.