

Hon. Anne David-Antoine
Minister of Environment, Grenada

(transcribed from video footage)

Madam Chair, I bring greetings from the people of Grenada, in whose name I have the honour to speak at this very special event here today. Let me first thank the distinguished President of the Republic of Palau, the Government and people of Palau, and other countries, and the United States' jurisdictions of the Micronesian region for their kind invitation and for their leadership on this most important issue. Let me also take the opportunity to express our profound gratitude to the Government and people of Brazil, for their kind invitation to visit these beautiful shores, for their generous support, their warmth and kind hospitality afforded to me and my delegation since our arrival here.

For us in Grenada, today indeed marks a historic and momentous juncture in our efforts to protect, conserve, enhance and restore the quality and value of our natural resources in order to sustain social and economic development for the present and for future generations. This vision is enshrined in our regional charter for environmental sustainability, which was signed by the Ministers for the Environment of the organisation of Eastern Caribbean States in Grenada in 2001, the St George's Declaration of Principles for Environment Sustainability. While the referenced declaration of principles accompanied by our recently concluded regional and national Environmental Management Policies and Strategies provide the framework for this commitment to be made here today, I must categorically state that we have been inspired by the Micronesia Challenge.

In this specific regard, we again express our thanks to the Micronesia region, and extend our best wishes for success on this challenging endeavour. The theme of this meeting is most appropriate; Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: a Global Island Partnership. The links between and among islands, biodiversity, livelihoods, and partnerships are fundamental aspects. Efforts to ensure the health, prosperity and cultural heritage of nations all are unlikely to succeed if the ecosystem services on which we all rely continue to be degraded.

Expanded conservation efforts and achieving them through partnerships with the international community and across all regions and islands are required for our sustainable development. Madam Chairperson, Grenada like the other countries in our region, recognises the importance of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, especially in the context of Small Island Developing States. We also recognise the extreme vulnerability of all Small Island Developing States to the vagaries of the global economy and the potentially devastating impacts of natural phenomena on our social, economic, cultural, ecological and environmental infrastructure. A case in point with which I am very familiar is the devastation caused by Category Four Hurricane Ivan, which visited the Caribbean shores in September 2004. For Grenada in particular, apart from the loss of lives, the economic and social fabric of the country was severely affected. The quantifiable damage sustained amounted to almost three times the country's annual Gross Domestic Product.

Over 90% of our wildlife, forested lands, watersheds and mangroves were left in a state of total devastation. Significant damage was also done to our marine environment, in particular our seagrass beds, coral reefs, and beaches. Ten months later, we were again visited by another hurricane, Hurricane Emily. The need for building resilience to mitigate these impacts is and must be of paramount importance for us.

Having due regard to the work under the Convention on Biological Diversity, we fully subscribe to the 2010 Biodiversity Target and the Convention Programmes of Work, in particular Protected Areas, Coastal and Marine, Alien and Invasive Species and the soon to be concluded Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity. In line with the Micronesia Challenge, the

Government and people of Grenada hereby make a strong commitment to effectively conserve at least 25% of all nearshore marine resources and at least 25% of all terrestrial resources by 2020.

Madam Chair, I must at this juncture, recognise the work of all technical staff and the support of our regional and international friends and partners in our effort to achieve our vision. The recent work completed on the Protected Areas Gap Analysis provided the technical basis for our commitment. Quite recently, Grenada signed a Memorandum of Understanding with The Nature Conservancy to collaborate in the implementation of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas. We fully appreciate the technical support received in this important work so far, and we welcome other partnerships that would help us to achieve our goals.

While we call for the continued support by the international community we will not delay on the national level to institute all measures within our capacity to ensure the fulfillment of this commitment.

Madam Chair, let me close by saying that we aim to act responsibly as stewards of unique island biodiversity. We aim to ensure that the critical services provided by our terrestrial and marine ecosystems are left intact for generations to come. We aim to act to sustain our livelihoods so that our children may enjoy the quality of life and beauty that our islands have provided for us. We entrust to establish the political, legislative and administrative frameworks necessary to give effect to this framework. We are fully aware of the challenge before us. We aim here to challenge ourselves and to fulfill this commitment being fully cognizant of the dire consequences of not doing so. We are aware that earth was given to us and we aim to preserve it.

Thank you.