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Mr President, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Hon. President of Palau, the Hon. President of the Seychelles for convening this event *ad laterem* of the CBD COP, the core international forum on the environment-and-development binomial, and the respectable Government of The Bahamas also for hosting it. Let me convey a special praise to the whole GLISPA team for its endeavour to build a solid strategic foundation for a successful and effective partnership between the islands of the whole world, as well as to all the Countries, TNC and all Organizations that have contributed to build the team itself.

Italy as a country surrounded by the sea, and with a number of islands, all environmentally rich and vulnerable, has acquired a concerned awareness on the challenges behind islands environmental protection and sustainable development. Together with an insight consciousness of the countless related management problems, we have historically developed a sense of alertness to the numerous man-induced impacts on the islands' fragile environment, including when trying to protect it! Success stories can obviously be useful, if transferred to others, but error-made too can become valuable, if we are able to learn from them and transfer the acquired knowledge to others before they make the same mistakes.

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Environment Programme of DGCS, its Directorate General for Development Cooperation, which I have the privilege to represent here as the Focal Point for Environment, is eager to share with all the islands of the world its own experience and technological know-how on islands, as well as to learn from them.

That is why DGCS, building upon the SIDS partnership which was launched by the Italian Government in the framework of the Mauritius Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 2005, did support the establishment and continues to proactively sustain the consolidation and advance of the Global Island Partnership.

Every year DGCS allocates several millions of Euros on projects specifically aimed at supporting the sustainable development of islands (ca. 10.000.000 Euro per year). In all of them we have adopted a holistic vision and a systemic approach functionally to reducing the risk of collision between environment conservation and poverty alleviation goals. That is why we promote the integration of social and economical aspects into all projects designed to protect the environment, and vice versa. Our island programmes make no exception.

In this respect, partnerships can be valuable instruments to build bridges of knowledge across different fraternities of islands, whether thematic or geographical. Partnerships can help us pursuing our sustainable development goals by promoting dialogue and sharing of know-how, good practices and appropriate technologies, through both North-South and South-South exchanges.

On the occasion of the Johannesburg Summit on sustainable Development, in 2002, DGCS launched its first innovative Type 2 partnership initiative on islands bridging the Arabian Sea and the Pacific Ocean through a link between the Socotra and Galapagos Archipelagos in the framework of a Programme for sustainable development and poverty alleviation on islands of high biodiversity value.

Such partnership was established upon the consideration that, no matter how distant both geographically and culturally such islands may be, they share similar problems in the management of their natural resources and they are under similar socio-economic development pressure, while showing strong complementary potential in terms of experience and lessons-learned in tackling the same problems.

During the 2005 Mauritius SIDS Conference, Italy together with its Ecuadorian and Yemeny partners, launched, in collaboration with IUCN, an initiative linking all Small Island Developing States of the

world in a Sustainable Development Programme. The first outcome of this initiative, aimed at contributing to the actual putting into operation the Barbados Programme of Action, has been a comparative assessment of the capacity building needs of all SIDS toward the fulfilment of The very Barbados Programme goals. The Global Island Partnership represents the most significant and internationally momentous evolution in this pursuit.

Building upon the opportunity provided by the Global Island Partnership to broaden and strengthen Italy's ongoing support to the sustainable development of islands, DGCS contributes to consolidating GLISPA strategy and its structure, as well as to supporting its operations. Among others:

- Rome was the birthplace of the Partnership's Mission and of its new Strategy, as the Italian Government through DGCS and our Ministry of Environment's Directorate General for the Protection of Nature, hosted and co-sponsored the GLISPA strategy meeting in our Capital last year.
- DGCS, through IUCN annual Trust Fund, will financially support the GLISPA coordination team and Island Programme (500.000 Euro).
- UNEP-WCMC has just been granted by DGCS the funds needed to develop the Global Island Database, which will form an integral part of the GLISPA Strategic Action Plan, and will also significantly contribute to the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work as adopted by the Conference of the Parties of the CBD in 2006, through decision VIII/1 (60.000 Euro).
- In the framework of the Italian Co-operation Programme on Climate Change, DGCS is currently funding -through IUCN- a project on renewable energy, to support the Pacific Islands in the development and implementation of environmentally sound, sustainable energy policies, as well as in the implementation of renewable energy pilot projects, while focusing on ecosystem conservation and livelihood enhancement. Such project was placed under the umbrella of GLISPA, and designed in order to contribute to the Partnership activities (3.000.000 Euro DGCS + 5.000.000 Euro MATTM).
- Another project, focusing on disaster preparedness, early warning, risk management, disaster mitigation and disaster recovery is currently being designed in collaboration with UNDP and UNEP, to the benefit of the Caribbean SIDS (5.000.000 Euro).
- Other collaborations with UNEP and GEF in the framework of the island Programme are currently being explored by DGCS.
- And next to come, among DGCS' Island policy development initiatives, in October 2008 the IUCN World Conservation Congress will host in Barcelona a DGCS high-level technical workshop on the efficacy of currently adopted methodologies and implemented actions towards the eradication of invasive alien species on islands.

But let me conclude with renewing my sincere thanks to the Conveners, Hosts and Organizers of today's event together with my warmest wishes for GLISPA steady progress and boundless success and pass the floor to Julia Marton-Lefèvre, DG of IUCN, partner of DGCS over the years in a number of conservation and sustainable development pursuits and, again now, under the GLISPA umbrella, in the global island challenge.