

Julia Marton-Lefèvre
IUCN Director General

Mr President of Palau, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I grew up in a landlocked country – Hungary – and thus islands were always a part of my childhood dreams. My happiest moments in the rather bleak years of post war Hungary were, in fact, spent on Margaret Island on the Danube in the centre of Budapest. And of course in some ways Hungary is also an island, surrounded by different cultures and peoples on all sides. And now I live in another land-locked ‘island’, Switzerland – so I must really be an island person at heart.

I have just come to Bonn from a real island, Japan, where I attended the meeting of G8 Ministers of Environment preparing for the G8 summit later this year, but my journey to Bonn began last week, in Paris, where I participated in the opening of a wonderful exhibit at the Museum of Natural History (an IUCN member) on the biodiversity treasures of the island of Aldabra, a part of the Seychelles and a part of humanity’s important World Heritage sites.

IUCN is honoured to participate in this Celebration of Island Leadership. The commitments by leaders and organisations expressed this evening are testament to the determination and political will towards conserving biodiversity and supporting livelihoods on islands throughout the world. The Global Islands Partnership, GLISPA, is both a catalyst and a framework for action that can and will make a real difference to communities on islands whether large or small, States or non States, and across the spectrum of socioeconomic development. We have heard during the last week and a half here at the CBD CoP about the need for improved collaboration on a wide range of issues affecting island communities and ecosystems around the world, including: climate change, conservation of biodiversity, and energy and agricultural production.

It is clear to me that GLISPA has a central role to play to support island states and other islands, and it is the ideal framework for the implementation of the CBD’s programme of work on island biodiversity.

In support of GLISPA and its wider membership, IUCN is further developing its Islands Initiative, which will focus on addressing integrated management challenges for marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems, for the conservation of island biodiversity, and the sustainable development of island communities. In partnership with the Italian Government, IUCN recently completed a survey analysis on the socio-economic and environmental challenges facing islands today. The forthcoming publication *Island Voices Island Choices* provides strategies for living with rapid ecosystem change in small islands, and is guiding the development and implementation of IUCN’s Islands Initiative.

After comprehensive consultations with donors, members and partners, IUCN opened its Oceania regional office in Fiji in 2006. This is the first presence of IUCN in the Pacific and through the Oceania office we aim to strengthen collaborations with members from the region in working towards common objectives. IUCN also aims to enhance regional collaborations and partnerships between other island regions and the Pacific.

IUCN is building on its ongoing work in the Mediterranean, including through the development of a partnership with WWF and other key regional partners, supporting networks of marine protected areas, the sustainability of fisheries in the region and working on issues of high seas governance.

Across the Atlantic, IUCN has recently been developing strategies for the Caribbean, and following an active process of analysis, consultation and strategic planning carried out over the

past two years to engage members and partners in the region, we will be launching our Caribbean Initiative later this year at our World Conservation Congress.

IUCN in Europe is busy organising a conference under the auspices of the French Presidency of the EU, on islands and climate change, to be held on Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean, in July. This gathering will bring together for the first time representatives from island communities of European overseas territories and outermost regions to discuss strategies for sustainable development in the face of biodiversity loss and climate change. It will also seek to establish improved dialogue between the European States with islands, and the wider island community.

A key event in this year's calendar for IUCN is the World Conservation Congress, to be held in October in Barcelona. Islands and issues affecting islands will feature strongly in the various thematic workshops. We are also organising a so-called islands "journey", to guide participants through all the island-related events on the programme. I would like to extend a warm invitation to you all to attend the congress, and to use this opportunity to further raise awareness on island conservation and sustainable development.

In moving ahead with our islands work in IUCN, we will ensure close coordination with GLISPA, and I am extremely pleased this evening to *announce* that IUCN will be hosting the GLISPA Coordination Team to support delivery of the GLISPA 2010 strategy. IUCN is a multi-stakeholder organisation with a wide range of members working throughout the world in islands and on issues affecting islands, and I therefore believe that we are ideally positioned to bring our experiences to the coordination of GLISPA, and enhance collaborations among its array of partners. I assure you of the full support of IUCN for the success of GLISPA coordination unit. We will soon begin the search for the GLIPSA Coordinator and a communications officer, and would welcome your assistance in circulating this widely to ensure we attract the best possible candidates for these important positions.

In support of this work, IUCN expresses its sincere gratitude to the Italian Government and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for the funding that has enabled the establishment of the GLISPA Coordination Team, and also for the support of the French and US Governments for providing funds for IUCN's wider islands activities. We highly appreciate the dedication and efforts of TNC and the GLISPA Steering Committee in getting GLISPA up and running.

We all know and sometimes lose track of the great number of acronyms we use in the environmental world, but 'GLISPA' has become nearly a household word in a very short time span. This just demonstrates the commitment and energy of the large number of partners who are here in this room with us this evening and those who will surely join this important movement. So, thank you again for the numerous commitments announced tonight and thanks for those to come. We look forward to continuing to work closely as we build on all this energy and all the wonderful work that has been done to bring us to this point.