

Joy Grant
Vice President and Director of Global Partnerships
The Nature Conservancy

Your Excellency, President Michel
Your Excellency, Vice President Kamsek Elia Chin
Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors
Distinguished Guests

As the Vice President and Director of Global Partnerships at The Nature Conservancy, I am very honored to speak to you today on behalf of a consortium of international conservation NGOs that are working together with island states and other low-lying coastal states to build effective systems of protected areas.

But before I start my remarks, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the horrible disaster that struck several island states just a few days ago, and offer our sincere condolences for the extreme loss of life. While we do not know the extent of the damage to the protected areas, we are aware and saddened by the many deaths of local protected area management staff, as well as representatives from our fellow conservation organizations, such as Flora & Fauna International.

At this time, the Nature Conservancy is sending staff to the region to see how we can help the families of the protected area staff that were lost, in addition to assessing what can be done to rebuild the parks as part of the larger reconstruction efforts. Our thoughts are with all those impacted by this disaster.

I am here today to talk about the creation and effective management of networks of protected areas. As you know, through these networks, local and indigenous peoples are assured the fish stocks necessary for their livelihood. These networks also provide for national revenue through tourism and act as buffers against the adverse impacts of climate change. Yet, these networks cannot be successfully created or managed without the partnership of those impacted – the local people themselves and the leaders of island states.

It has been the desire of the conservation community to support island states as they set up protected area networks. Our support has ranged from designing the networks, developing the financing portfolios to sustain them, and providing technical and management training to local organizations and governments. As part of our continuing commitment to supporting island states, it is with pleasure that I announce today that The Nature Conservancy is investing \$2 million dollars in the form of **Early Action Grants**.

These **Early Action Grants** specifically focus on meeting the goal of creating representative networks of marine protected areas by 2012 – a goal set by the Convention of Biological Diversity. Information on how to apply for these Early Action Grants is available in the back of the room in The Nature Conservancy folder.

I acknowledge that \$2 million dollars is a small investment if taken by itself. It is our hope that these grants will help start activities that will bring about additional public-private partnerships with a full range of stakeholders. This investment is just one way that The Nature Conservancy recognizes, not only the critical role played by marine and coastal resources in the sustainable development of island states, but also the wealth of biodiversity found in the surrounding seas.

Islands, Reefs and Communities: Committing to the Future
Side Event at the Mauritius International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for
the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States
13 January 2005, Mauritius

In closing, let us remember that conserving biodiversity means caring about ALL life – over the coming weeks, our hearts will be with those individuals, especially those living in island states, who, due to the tsunami, have suffered incredible personal losses.

Yet today, we are also focused on the future – a future in which increased collaboration and equitable partnerships lead to the creation of networks of protected areas – a sustainable future for island states and other low-lying coastal states.