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Your Excellencies, Ministers, friends

There has been no more important time for islands in the history of our life on this planet. Now more than ever before, your leadership is so important to our future. Islands help us all clearly SEE the bond between nature and people. Your inspiring actions return balance to the way we manage our natural resources.

I know we will succeed as GLISPA is a true partnership among governments, international organizations and NGOs; ALL sharing in a common vision. As Minister Gabriel said, "the Global Island Partnership is a new model that helps islands take control of their destiny".

This Partnership – that provides us with this platform today – that provides us with a sense of common purpose for islands and sustainable livelihoods – and that is now formally recognized as mechanism to assist the CBD Secretariat and Parties implement the Program of Work on Island Biodiversity – has again brought to center-stage a number of truly inspirational achievements and new commitments. My congratulations to President Remengesau, President Mori and the leaders across Micronesia for the vision and tremendous progress to implement the Micronesia Challenge – when the Challenge was launched at COP8, just two years ago – my how time flies – The Nature Conservancy pledged to help make it sustainable and I know, together with you, CI the GEF and other partners here tonight, we will.

The Nature Conservancy also wants to recognize and support the role that GLISPA is playing in helping connect and catalyze these commitments. The Partnership has grown significantly since Mauritius 2005 – it has grown because of the vision and commitment of those here in this room tonight. Now, with a 2010 Strategic Plan in place, a growing number of partners and actions in islands that can be directly supported – the Coral Triangle Initiative being one of the most recent examples – the Partnership now needs the glue for the next 3 years to help island countries and countries with islands capitalize on this momentum.

Our contribution to this glue will be in terms of staff and resources. We're please to join Seychelles and Palau and the commitment they have made over the past 2 years and again this evening to strengthen GLISPA. Just this month, The Nature Conservancy recruited our first dedicated Island Advisor to coordinate our global portfolio of activities to advance the conservation of island biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods. We also commit \$500,000 for activities that strengthen and expand the Global Island Partnership.

And I am so pleased that IUCN will be taking a leadership role in GLISPA's future and that Julia Marton-Lefevre is here to outline their plans for the exciting future for the Partnership. The guidance and support of the Italian Government has been instrumental in developing island partnerships and will continue to be instrumental in this next phase of the Partnership and in particular the guidance your next speaker – Dr Alfredo Guillet – a true island champion who has been working on island development issues for many years.

But before I hand over to Dr Guillet, let me close with our contribution to one of the Partnership's primary goals –IMPLEMENTATION. Tonight the Caribbean Challenge has been officially launched. To the Prime Minister of the Bahamas and President of the Dominican Republic we thank you for your vision and commitment to action. In response, our pledge to our Caribbean partners tonight, is that The Nature Conservancy will raise \$20 million to help implement and sustainably finance the Challenge.

You have made it clear that conservation is clearly a development priority and we will continue to work with you to transform the way in which conservation is done in the region. It is our hope that this contribution will assist you, as it has in Micronesia, to leverage the support required from within your

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islands, from the private sector and international community to secure a lasting future for nature and all people of the Caribbean.

Thank you. Dr Guillet, you have the floor.