

Jon Hutton, Director of UNEP-WCMC

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues and – I think in many cases – friends,

On behalf of UNEP Deputy Director Angela Cropper I'd like to extend her best wishes and a million apologies that she cannot be here. As many of you know, Angela Cropper is an island person. Being from Trinidad & Tobago she is very sad that she could not make it here tonight. Angela knows very well the challenges of trying to achieve conservation and sustainable livelihoods on islands.

Although Angela cannot be here, she has asked me to give her a full report of the event. You can't help but be impressed by the level of commitments that have been made tonight. We hope that this level of commitment will convince UNEP to further engage with islands. There is a long tradition of working with island through the regional SIDS programs, but we cannot pretend that we can't make it much better.

Back to the core business, it is my distinguished pleasure to announce this evening that we are going to be starting a Global Islands Information Portal Database. This is an undertaking that will we put together with a range of partners – you have heard from Dr. Alfredo Guillet earlier that there will be some contribution from the Italian government – to create the sort of portal that a number of government and partners have been requesting but that so far we have been unable to put together.

The project is not going to be brand new and we will be trying to put together existing datasets since there are many fine works around the world that are trying to collect information about islands. Besides the Italian government, we will be working with the Global Islands Network, the Secretariat of the CBD and IUCN – and this may even surprise IUCN. WCMC was actually a child of IUCN some 25 years ago and, you know, some children never leave home. There are many wonderful initiatives in IUCN that can help us achieve our goal and we would like to discuss this with you.

It is anticipated that this Database will fit into future assessments, communicate key issues and support actions on islands.

UNEP and WCMC in particular is pleased to be a member of the Global Island Partnership. We are pleased that this Database will fit into the GLISPA Strategic Action Plan and we anticipate that it will make a substantial contribution to the implementation of the CBD Island Biodiversity Program of Work.

I'd like to finish by quoting Albert Einstein, who said "How I wish somewhere there existed an island for those who are wise and of goodwill". Well, it is quite clear that there are thousands of islands full of people that are very wise and willing to offer their good will and I am delighted to have dinner with some of them tonight.

Thank you very, very much.