

Mr Jim Leape
Director General
WWF International

Firstly, congratulations to all those here this evening who have made such great strides in overcoming the odds to envision and realize your path to long term sustainability. As a conservation organization working on island biodiversity issues in over 40 countries worldwide, WWF applauds the commitment shown here tonight.

Some of the most exciting conservation announcements which WWF has supported in the past year reflect the energy and leadership necessary to successfully scale up conservation approaches. A short and by no means complete list of those WWF would most like to congratulate begins with the remarkable 30% by 2020 pledge by Fiji, which provides a breathtaking example of island partnerships that focus on ensuring the future.

Like Fiji, the five island nations of the Western Indian Ocean marine ecoregion made an impressive pledge at the SIDS meeting in Mauritius last year. Since then, the heads of state have unanimously agreed to create a new regional marine protected area network which will be supported by a financing agreement of close to 2 million Euros, signed just last month between the government of France, CI and WWF.

Linking protected areas with fisheries management, the EU Council recently adopted the Atlantic Ocean Regulation to protect seamounts and reefs in the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands from bottom trawling. An enormous closed fisheries zone now covers the entire EEZ around the Azores, helping safeguard against a primary threat. This sets a basis for the designation of MPAs such as on the offshore Sedlo Seamount for which WWF has recently published a management plan.

The recent proposal by New Zealand's deepwater fishing industry to protect 31% of the EEZ from bottom trawling is another key development. Industry's recognition of the devastation caused by bottom trawling is a welcome signal for change and progress toward biodiversity and sustainable management targets. WWF looks forward to working with the Government, the fishing industry, and other stakeholders to ensure that the momentum generated by the proposal bolsters New Zealand's ongoing efforts to effectively address the effects of bottom trawling and to develop an adequate, representative, and comprehensive MPA network.

All of these successes rely on effective tools and approaches. Last week we helped in the global launch of a new tool for ensuring MPA financial sustainability. Born in the MesoAmerican Reef ecoregion, this model assesses long term protected area system financial needs and will greatly facilitate the development of sustainable financing plans as called for under the CBD Protected Areas program of work.

And finally, we would like to congratulate Indonesia for its commitments here tonight, some of which are the direct outcome of the CBD COP7, where the Philippines, Malaysian and Indonesian governments declared their strong support for conservation in an MOU around the Sulu Sulawesi marine ecoregion. This collaboration between islands, across large expanses of water and territorial boundaries, as well as a range of institutions and interests, is our best chance of success.

Just as exciting as the scope and scale of this list and all of the announcements made here tonight is the diversity in approaches taken and the eagerness to share and learn from one another. Certainly the sense of urgency is not overstated. These sound bites of good news are

Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A Global Partnership
COP 8 High Level Event 28 March 2006
Curitiba, Brazil

themselves islands within a sea of findings on just how precarious our situation is with respect to managing our biodiversity, our food supply, our natural wealth and cultural heritage.

WWF thus adds our pledge to the others here this evening to pursuing ever more effective partnerships for islands and marine biodiversity, worldwide.

Thank you.