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Recommendations

Coming out of the
Ocean Life Symposium

Held at
**Fort Young Hotel,
Roseau**

On
23-25th March, 2009.



The Ocean Life Symposium sponsored by the Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness (ECCEA) and the Pew Environment Group, in coordination with UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme, was convened from 23-25 March 2009 at the Fort Young Hotel in Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica.

The Symposium was attended by participants from Dominica, other Caribbean countries, North America, Latin America, West Africa and Europe. Present at the meeting were scientists, academics, technical experts, fisherfolk, representatives of government and civil society.

Those in attendance heard several papers and interventions from the stakeholders, and a call from the Hon. Prime Minister of Dominica for recommendations.

After deliberation, the Symposium participants agreed to the recommendations outlined on the pages following.

It was decided that the recommendations would be conveyed formally to the Government of Dominica, as well as to those Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations represented at the Symposium and others as appropriate.



Preamble

In keeping with Dominica's vision to achieve sustainable development and long term economic growth, without jeopardising the valuable and rich natural and cultural heritage on which that economic growth depends and which has made Dominica world renown as the nature isle of the region;

Recognising that, given Dominica's special attributes, land use changes and development patterns contribute to land based pollution impacting on the island's coastal and marine resources;

Noting that Dominica has been an active participant of several international and regional initiatives, including as a contracting party to the global Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the regional convention on the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean (Cartagena Convention)

Recognising the importance of regional cooperation for the protection and management of the marine environment in the Wider Caribbean, in particular of shared coastal and marine resources;

Recognising the unique natural beauty of Dominica, the importance of its natural resources to sustaining and improving the livelihoods of its people and hence the need to protect and maintain the ecological and cultural integrity of the country;

The participants of this symposium recommend the following actions to assist with the preservation of Dominica's natural environment while addressing its social and economic needs:

Recommendations

- 1) That the government of Dominica join other countries of the region in their efforts towards regional cooperation for the protection and sustainable management of the coastal and marine resources of the Wider Caribbean by becoming a contracting party to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) and the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities (LBS), both being part of the Cartagena Convention to which Dominica has been a Contracting Party since 1990 and which would allow Dominica to benefit fully from the processes and initiatives being promoted and supported by these treaties.
- 2) That the Government of Dominica take full advantage of its membership to UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) by continuing to participate actively in the CEP, in its initiatives and meetings, in particular those related to sharing and collaboration with other nations of the region on issues of common interest such as providing technical assistance and cooperation on matters including but not limited to information sharing, guidelines for whale watching operations, better practices for sustainable fisheries and other appropriate opportunities for collaboration at the regional level.
- 3) That an agreement be drafted relevant to the French proposal for cooperation to develop regional partnerships between the French West Indies and Dominica in the fields of biodiversity conservation, including the implementation of joint workshops in order to improve knowledge and conservation of regional biodiversity (including, for example, marine turtles, Lesser Antillean iguana, and cetaceans). It is further recommended that those cooperation opportunities with Dominica be pursued, *inter alia*:
 - 3.i) along common lines with the Agoa Marine Mammal Sanctuary project, which can provide an excellent means for international promotion of a common model for ensuring the well-being of whales and responsible and sustainable whale-watching.
 - 3.ii) that the Government of Dominica and regional Small Island Developing States (SIDS) take advantage of, and benefit from, specific proposals made to them by the European Union and its Overseas Territories described in: **Strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss as concluded by the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, agreed to at the *Reunion Island Meeting of the EU on the-11 July 2008*, and annexed to these "Recommendations".
- 4) That those civil society organisations engaged in promoting whale and dolphin conservation, animal welfare and non-lethal use of whales, in particular whale-watching, urgently develop strategies for encouraging overseas visitors to travel to Dominica.
- 5) That resources be sought through institutions, the public sector and the European Union to:
 - a. support coordination of community development, education, and media professionals throughout our region in a campaign to deepen appreciation for the

- b. take account of the special needs of the small islands and coastal regions of our hemisphere;
 - c. assist local communities in efforts at taking inventory of natural resources under their stewardship;
 - d. support joint efforts to identify investment opportunities that create a green investment portfolio that is local, national, and regional, and could include investments in agro-ecology, natural wellness systems, the development of story telling for radio and TV, and other teaching materials; and
 - e. give strong support to efforts in Dominica for the development and implementation of the Nature Island Games.
- 6) That formal and informal practical educational and training programmes for fishers, educational institutions and others involved in fisheries and the tourism industry in Dominica be developed so as to promote best practices for the development of responsible whale and dolphin-watching activities.
- 7) That protocols and guidelines be developed and disseminated to fishers, tourist operators, governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders outlining correct and sustainable approaches to be used for whale watching so as not to jeopardise cetacean populations. It was recommended that this be done by way of regulations or other legal instruments. Several websites provide examples of viable marine mammal watching protocols, including: http://www.eccea.org/uploads/File/ECCEA-Guide_Naturaliste.pdf and http://www.ifaw.org/assets/Media_Center/Press_Releases/asset_upload_file92_53765.pdf.
- 8) That programmes be envisaged to reduce acoustic disturbances from whale-watching vessels by the use of electric engines in some cases and appropriate sound insulation in critical habitats.
- 9) That standardised reporting methodologies among countries in the region be developed so as to allow for better data capture, scientific and policy analysis and decision making. In this regard, fishermen and civil servants in Dominica should be given training and support in data collection, and further development of local field research capacity should also be supported. It was felt that greater benefits could also be realised by drawing on the shared experiences of those working in various areas of conservation across the region and that to this end the organisation of and participation in multilingual workshops by professionals of various disciplines would be particularly beneficial to this process.
- 10) That on-line interactive databases relevant to marine habitats and biodiversity - for example, that developed by the Institute of Tropical Marine Ecology (ITME) in Dominica (see www.itme.org/marinehabitats) - be maintained and further developed as important tools for public education in Dominica and throughout the Caribbean region.
- 11) That the different concerns of the fishers expressed at the meeting and featured in the Socio-Economic Survey, be addressed by the relevant agencies and institutions. These

concerns include: improved education of fishers in various aspects of fish biology ; institution of a closed season (e.g. of 4 months) to help revival of fish stocks ; better quality and size control ; improvement in fish location techniques to reduce costly displacement of small craft at sea (sometimes beyond 50 nautical miles) and to reduce what is a hazard for those fishers navigating without ship to shore communications ; investigation of land-based pollution due to random disposal of chemicals, oil, hospital refuse and other garbage into rivers and the sea, which affects juvenile fish stocks and inshore breeding grounds.

- 12) That in coordination with the appropriate funding agencies, ways to stimulate Eastern Caribbean economies be envisaged through community based initiatives, further creation of centers for the incubation of micro-projects, marine environmental education programmes and the organisation of regional and international symposia in order to raise interest and resolve for the protection of the region's environment
- 13) That the SEPANMAR, ECCEA and the Government of Dominica enter into an agreement for scientific research to identify migration patterns of cetaceans and avifauna between Martinique and Dominica involving scientific support and training.
- 14) That Dominica's ecotourism including its World Heritage Site be promoted as a model for Eastern Caribbean and other Small Island Developing States by the Government of Dominica and by civil society, in Dominica and abroad.
- 15) That there be an urgent investigation into the sources of pollution of Dominica's coastal waters deriving from land-based (particularly quarrying) and marine activities in order to recommend immediate mitigation actions.
- 16) That measures be put in place to compel existing quarry operators to comply with best universal practices for the containment of pollution and assurance of safety and health of neighbouring communities. There is currently great concern about the possible detrimental impacts of quarrying on the terrestrial and marine life and the environment.
- 17) That studies should be undertaken to assess carrying capacity and optimal visitation rates of all ecotourism sites (including whale-watching tours) in Dominica and future management should be based on such studies.
- 18) In acknowledgement that live capture and trade in small cetaceans is a threat to wild dolphin populations, that dolphin watching be endorsed as an alternative to captivity, serving as a model for other countries in the region, and further that Dominica implement policies that would prevent the capture of dolphins from Dominican waters or holding dolphins in captivity in Dominica.
- 19) That consideration be given by governments in the region to find alternative income earning activities for persons currently involved in lethal use of cetaceans.
- 20) That more cooperation be sought with France and other Lesser Antillean nations for the

development of a coherent fisheries management strategy for the sub-region as a whole.

- 21) That it be recognized that scientific research has demonstrated that whales' consumption of fish is not the cause of problems confronting fisheries management, neither in the Caribbean nor across the globe. Hence, the continued practice of blaming whales for fisheries depletion should cease, as it serves only to distract from the important business of resolving the real fisheries management problems.
- 22) That existing and new avenues and mechanisms for technical and non-technical exchange among countries in the Wider Caribbean Region be strongly promoted and supported.
- 23) That cooperative regimes should be established across the islands for further development of conservation and sustainable non-lethal use of cetaceans. Several recommendations involved marine mammal and cetacean protected areas in the region including:
 - a. Other eastern Caribbean countries to take measures in parallel with the AGOA whale sanctuary of the French West Indies and to participate in assessment opportunities of the status of cetaceans in the Caribbean;
 - b. Twinning between the Silver Banks Sanctuary of the Dominican Republic and the AGOA Sanctuary of the French West Indies;
- 24) That the use of fora such as this symposium throughout the Caribbean region to stimulate interest and result in the protection of the environment be strongly supported.
- 25) That the need for consultation with and full involvement of local communities to ensure success and the entrenchment of the desired approaches set out in the above recommendations be fully recognized.

The meeting welcomed and applauded the statement of the Prime Minister of Dominica the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit who addressed the opening session of the meeting and said, in part:

“...you will recall last year that the Government took the very bold decision after many decades of support to the whaling issue. I say to you, that as long as I am Prime Minister this country will not renege on that commitment of staying clear of this voting for whaling. We have taken this decision because we believe it is in the best national interest of Dominica. And we are not going back on our decision...”

In view of the Prime Minister's clear and unequivocal statement that Dominica would not support whaling, the meeting determined that a congratulatory message should be released and that representatives of governments and agencies in attendance should also ask their governments and agencies to show support for Dominica's position by issuing congratulatory statements.

ANNEX:



***The European Union and its Overseas Territories:
strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss***

***Conclusions by the French Presidency of the Council of the European
Union***

Reunion island - 11 July 2008

Considering the outstanding biodiversity in European overseas countries and territories (OCT) Europe's Outermost Regions (ORs) as compared with continental Europe;

Considering that the social and cultural diversity of each European overseas and outermost country, territory and region is a major asset in terms of the well-being of their inhabitants and of their economic development;

Considering the need for European overseas countries and territories to act within a regional framework in order to counter climate change and biodiversity loss;

Considering the vulnerability and proneness of natural habitats and species in European overseas territories to the impact of climate change;

Considering, therefore, the socio-economic, health and food-related risks to which people in ORs and OCTs are exposed and the resulting migratory trends (economic and environmental refugees);

Considering the leading role played by overseas regions and territories in the search for and experimentation in the field of environment protection;

And, faced with all the afore-mentioned challenges, considering the need to undertake action within the European Union as a whole;

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the light of the work and findings of participants attending the La Reunion conference on "The European Union and its Overseas Territories: Strategies to Counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss", strongly urges:

- The European Union to strengthen its policy on countering the effects of climate change based on the experience gained by Europe's Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), notably with regard to monitoring the effects of global warming and the implementation of adaptation measures where undertaken;**

- The European Union and its member-states involved in international negotiations on biodiversity loss and climate change to leverage experience gained by European ORs and OCTs;
- the European Union, ORs, OCTs, ACPs and SIDSs to engage in international initiatives to combat climate change and biodiversity loss;
- the European Union to draw on and emulate the action taken in overseas countries and territories to implement EU development aid in the field of countering the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss;
- the member-states, the ORs and OCTs concerned to draw up plans for each OR and OCT to adapt to climate change and to include climate change and biodiversity loss in their economic development and spatial planning strategies;
- the EU member-states, ORs and OCTs concerned to promote greater energy efficiency and the use of renewable forms of energy, notably by enacting existing strategies in these areas;
- the European Union and its member-states concerned, ORs and OCTs to favour regional frameworks for action, notably with a view to sharing their experience and know-how with their neighbours (ACP countries, Africa Caribbean Pacific and Small Island Developing States), and to enhance environmental protection strategies deployed by regional organisations;
- the European Union to commit to the "Regional Seas" conventions to which one or more EU member-states are parties through their respective ORs;

the European Union to further deploy its intervention instruments with ORs, OCTs, ACP countries as well as with the Small Island Developing States (SIDSs), while easing and smoothing access to such instruments;

- the European Union to draw on the message issued by the Reunion Conference to implement Community-wide measures to preserve biodiversity and to combat climate change, in particular:
 - o undertake a programme of specific actions to meet the challenges raised by integrated management of coastal and marine zones in European overseas territories and in keeping with the principles laid down in the recent European marine strategy;
 - o in drafting the forthcoming statement from the Commission, consider tightening import and export controls to prevent the introduction of exotic
 - o promote synergism and complementarity between different territories in research, in particular by facilitating the joint access of ORs and OCTs to European-wide programmes;
 - o the creation, in partnership with the authorities concerned, of a mechanism aimed at conserving species and habitats based on the voluntary commitment of ORs and OCTs;
 - o support in enacting local regulations on urban planning as well as laws specific to building and construction in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Reinforcing regional cooperation is key and crucial in order to achieve these objectives. This requires overcoming regulatory or other differences in the pursuit of joint policies.