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**Congratulatory  
Statement  
To the  
Prime Minister of  
The Commonwealth of  
Dominica  
and his Government  
From the Organizers  
and Participants of the  
Ocean Life Symposium  
held at Fort Young  
Hotel, Roseau on 23-25<sup>th</sup>  
March, 2009.**

28<sup>th</sup> March, 2009

The Ocean Life Symposium sponsored by the Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environment 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, representatives of government and civil society. Dominican nongovernmental organisations, interest groups such as the fisherfolk and persons engaged in tourism, terrestrial and marine environmental activities were also in attendance.

The meeting was privileged to be addressed by the Prime Minister of Dominica, the Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit who in his address affirmed Dominica's pro conservation stance taken last year, and assured the meeting that it was the position of the government of Dominica not to support whaling and reaffirmed the commitment of his administration to the conservation of these animals.

The meeting was deeply moved by the very strong and unequivocal language used by the Prime Minister and in particular his statement that the Government is "a strong supporter of the conservation and preservation of the environment and will not renege on that commitment of staying clear of voting for whaling". We were particularly encouraged by the Prime Minister's assertion that he took the decision which he believed to be "in the best national interest of Dominica" and that neither he nor his government would be "going back on that decision".

Having heard the policy position of the government as articulated by the Prime Minister whose office is the decision making authority for matters related to International Whaling Commission, and the reiteration of this policy by the Hon. Ian Douglas, Minister of Legal Affairs and Tourism in his address at the closing session, this meeting congratulates the Prime Minister and the government of Dominica on its stance for conservation and protection of the environment in general, and specifically of marine mammals. It is the view of the meeting that this position taken by the Government will further strengthen the global image of Dominica as a place where biodiversity abounds and is protected.

- M.George-Dill (For ECCEA & Pew C.T.)