



DRAFT REPORT

Roundtable on European Islands' Challenges

ISLANDS – KEY ACTORS: WHAT KIND OF PARTNERSHIP AT THE EU LEVEL?

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Co-Chaired by Maurice Ponga, MEP and Ambassador Ronny Jumeau

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Welcoming words by MEP Maurice Ponga

MEP Maurice Ponga said that the EU is made up of various islands around its continental coasts but also other islands all around the world via its 8 Outermost Regions (ORs) and its 26 Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs).

In the perspective of the **United Nations’ year on Small Islands in 2014**, it was timely and necessary to organise such a roundtable in the European Parliament with the aim of identifying initiatives taken by islands to respond to the challenges they are faced with, namely in the area of the environment: *“I am absolutely convinced that Islands have a leading role to play,”* said MEP Maurice Ponga.

GLISPA is a Global Partnership for Islands involving over 60 governments and organisations from small developing island states, from large island states, states with islands, bilateral and multilateral states to collaborate, promote leadership and commitment on conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity.

Introductory remarks by Ambassador Ronny Jumeau

Ambassador Ronny Jumeau started his intervention by stating that: *“the Global Island Partnership has arrived in Brussels and we intend to stay to try and reach out to as many islands as possible.”*

GLISPA was set up in Mauritius in 2005 with the idea of building a partnership of islands regardless of political status – island states, countries with islands, international organisations and NGOs, etc. It is a non-political initiative with the aim of delivering results, about showing islands as leading the way, especially when it comes to islands’ biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods. *“One of the greatest champions of the CBD are islands,”* said Ambassador Jumeau.

With the growing emphasis on oceans, marine biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the debate on the future of sustainable development, now is the opportune time following Rio+20 to reach out to the islands of Europe, he argued.

Islands should be the ones leading the European effort at CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity –, according to Mr. Jumeau: *“There are many things that have been happening in islands that we feel have not been brought to the forefront. With GLISPA, we are placing islands’ biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods and oceans at the centre of the development debate. Conversations on these issues should not be*



carried out separately,” he argued. **Marine biodiversity is a development issue to many islands, such as the Republic of Seychelles; it is not just a conservation issue.**

Presentations

Carl Gustaf Lundin, Director of the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme

Carl Gustaf Lundin said that it is now widely understood that coastal marine ecosystems have a lot to offer, such as securing sustainable livelihoods for people living on islands. They have an important role for the protection of islands and securing healthy ecosystems and thus healthy people. *“Many islands depend on the status of the oceans and their ecosystems,”* said Mr. Lundin.

Many small island states are victims of introductions from the ocean – invasive marine species (terrestrial invasive species have also had tremendous consequences for islands). A series of surveys were carried on several islands to be able to assess the level of the impact IMS have on islands: every place where studies were made, there were introductions from the sea. The destructive impact of these introductions from the sea will nonetheless only be observed in about 30 years. Good policies and early warning systems are the best way of dealing with this, he said.

Climate change has been worrying many. Coastal ecosystems provide the best places to naturally absorb and sequester carbon – forests provide relatively little activity in terms of carbon sequestration, compared to marine ecosystems. *“There is thus every reason to treat our coastal ecosystems well and the work of many small island states is to be commended in that respect,”* held Mr. Lundin.

Climate change has a dramatic impact on coral reefs: in some places, as much as 90% of the reefs have died in just a matter of months – IUCN has just release a [report](#) on the health and state of coral reefs in the Caribbean showing that average live coral cover on Caribbean reefs has declined to just 8% of the reef today, compared with more than 50% in the 1970s (with some places being worse than that). It is not just climate that is affecting this situation: it has a lot to do with how resilient these reefs are.

One of the key resilience factors has to do with fishing. **Over-fishing, small-scale traps, turn out to be one of the most damaging practices for reefs.** *“Good management pays: it is an encouraging message that needs to be learnt,”* argued Mr. Lundin. The question now is how to recover some of these areas. **Good management practices can do a big difference.** We need to target all the intervention points within our reach to curb the curve into something more positive,



and to work more closely with islanders whose livelihoods also depends a lot on tourism.

Carl Gustaf Lundin concluded his intervention with some questions for reflection. How to build resilience, how to help industries reach out to communities and educate people, show good examples of what works and what does not work, build on good practices, and reduce the overall footprint of tourists and users of these resources? He gave the example of the Cook Island which has decided to declare 50% of its waters as a marine park: if this is managed in a good way, he said, the benefits will outweigh what was previously gained from fishing and other activities.

The effectiveness of these measures and the level and quality of assessments that have been done have been questioned, while some nations have expressed the worry that fishermen's livelihood issues have not been addressed properly.

Mr. Lundin said that **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is only one tool that can be very useful**, although in some places it has been oversold, he said: *"We need to be humble in terms of using this tool among all the other tools that we have at our disposal."*

MPAs have become a point of decision rather than a point of collaboration in certain cases, he deplored: this comes largely from a misconception of what ecosystem-based management really is about – how to maintain health and productivity of the system without reducing its ability to regenerate itself.

"We need to work with the people, make them understand what is in their main interest, and make their suggestions and way of doing at the heart of what happens, which can be hard when you are sitting in an office in Brussels or Washington," he concluded.

Carole Martinez, Coordinator of the IUCN Programme for EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories

Carole Martinez also highlighted the important, if not critical, role of islands when it comes to environmental issues and sustainable development goals, saying that EU overseas entities have a lot to offer to the European Union. **Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are strategic locations nested in every ocean of the world: they provide the European Union with strategic gateways in terms of governance of the seas and oceans and for cooperation.**

Often perceived as isolated, small and remote, European islands represent more than 200 islands and cover, all together, a land area as large as the EU. In addition, they provide the EU with the largest marine territory of the world and the only one located in every ocean of the world.



In 2008, representatives from the ORs and OCTs came together in La Réunion to discuss islands' biodiversity and climate change issues, with the aim of providing a [message with key recommendations](#) and a roadmap for moving forward and better taking into the account the important challenges but as well the potentials of the EU Overseas.

ORs and OCTs host 70% of the EU's biodiversity, a legitimate enough reason for islands to promote and support their actions as a condition for fulfilling not only the European targets but as well the international ones. Fully part of global Biodiversity hotspots, the importance of their natural heritage go beyond the local, national and European boundaries. In this respect, this importance has been recognised and highlighted in many international fora and inter-governmental conventions, and motivated several international designations with inscriptions of natural World Heritage sites on the [UNESCO's World Heritage List](#) and Ramsar Sites on the basis of the [Ramsar Convention on Wetlands](#).

Ms. Martinez posed the question whether EU islands are obvious allies to the European institutions and Member States when it comes to meeting the international targets for biodiversity and sustainable development. The answer is not so obvious: *"there is an increasing political acknowledgment since La Réunion Conference in 2008 and there is an increasing amount of communications from the European Commission underlining this strategic importance. Yet, when it comes to the concrete translation of this importance and implementation of these communications, there is still a lot to do."* she said. The [BEST Preparatory Action](#) in without doubt an important step, but this 3 years initiative will end this year although the important mobilization of the EU Overseas and the needs have been demonstrated with quality projects (the overall budget requested was 6 times higher than the available budget).

Regarding the importance of the marine territory of the EU Overseas, the [European Commission's Communication on the Integrated Maritime Policy \(IMP\)](#) does not mention the EU overseas. This can be a missed opportunity. The same goes for the [7th Environmental Action Plan](#), which does again not mention the EU overseas. Yet, it is clear that if efforts have to be done, it should definitely be also in the EU overseas territories. Another significant example is the EEA report launched in September 2012 assessing [protected areas in Europe](#); none of the protected areas in the EU overseas has been mentioned in that report. This is another example of a missed opportunity for reporting at the international level as well as allying with the EU Overseas for the implementation of the Target 6 of the EU Biodiversity strategy. Again, in the new [EU strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](#), there is no strong mention of the EU overseas, although we know that they are at the forefront of climate change impacts. *"We are as well waiting to see what will be the attention*



given to EU overseas entities in the dedicated EU Strategy on Invasive Alien Species,” said Ms. Martinez.

Looking at the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#), only one mention of the EU Overseas can be found in the chapter called “Partnerships for biodiversity” and . The question remaining is how to translate and implement this invitation for partnership?

Looking at the international marine targets (Aichi Targets), IUCN will soon publish an assessment of MPAs in the EU overseas. Champions in this field include Mayotte, which has decided in 2010 to create a [marine park](#) covering all its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), 68 381 Km². In addition, the ongoing works in Mayotte for the adoption of a Biodiversity strategy are sending a strong political signal to the EU for support this effort and helping Mayotte to set up an integrated model of development in the run of becoming an Outermost Region next January 2014.

In conclusion, Ms. Martinez called the EU and Member States to make more and better use of the EU overseas to reach the set targets at the international level and to push forward the objectives for biodiversity protection and sustainable development in the Union. Quoting the EU Biodiversity Strategy Ms. Martinez concluded *“Since we are definitely all in this together, the EU Overseas have a lot to offer with important potentials. Let’s navigate with the EU Overseas!”*

Olivier Gaston, Representative of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon (OCTA Chairmanship)

Olivier Gaston said that biodiversity protection appears like a major challenge in terms of cooperation. This challenge is clearly expressed in the messages from the meeting in La Réunion. Despite the success of this conference, the issue of biodiversity protection in the OCTs has remained quite low in the agendas, and the financial means limited. Yet, **the importance of this challenge is global.**

The Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) strives at positioning itself as a major player and actor in the fight for the protection of biodiversity in the EU Overseas. **30% of biodiversity hotspots are islands, such as New Caledonia and Reunion Island, and more than 70% of European biodiversity is to be found in its overseas regions, countries and territories.** It is thus necessary that the OCTA takes a leading role in this discussion.

The [Overseas Association Decision](#) (OAD) defines the framework of the OCTA’s actions in the field of biodiversity protection. Its ongoing revision has allowed a reinforcement of the existing dispositions in the field of the environment. Thematic cooperations were put in place to improve territorial initiatives.

Mr. Gaston highlighted that the question of financial and human means that will be put in place to help projects on biodiversity protection the EU overseas in times of



financial hardships cannot be overlooked. *“In order to scale up means to the levels of ambitions, OCTA calls for a realistic and pragmatic approach: it would not be realistic to expect governments from the OCTA to act alone and with their means in the face of such colossal challenges. 22 microstates and 1.5 million inhabitants can hardly take on alone the costs of the protection of an inestimable natural and cultural patrimony,”* decried Mr. Gaston.

Several successful projects are ongoing, such as the BEST ([facilitating project](#) and [preparatory action](#)) or [INTEGRE](#). Mr. Gaston informed the audience that the OCTA has asked for the current financial instrument towards development and integration to take further into account biodiversity protection in the OCTs.

Mr. Gaston argued that the funds from the Regional European Development Fund (REDF) could be further used for environmental thematic issues, mainly for 2 pragmatic reasons: the first being that the regional EDF is the only fund that will increase in the forthcoming programming and thus offers room for manoeuvre when it comes to the environment thematic, and the second reason being that it represents a cooperation level that covers the 25 OCTs, which can offer the possibility of setting up projects with neighbouring islands with the status of Outermost Regions (ORs) or Small Islands Developing States (SIDS).

Furthermore, the envelope dedicated to environmental projects should be sized in accordance to other parameters, he said, such as absorption capacity, human resources necessary, etc. to ensure high level of quality of projects. The main aim should also be to increase synergies between programmes.

OCTA recently opened a [Bureau](#) in Brussels, represented by experts, namely in the area of the environment.

A Ministerial conference bringing together the members of the various governments represented in OCTA will take place in Brussels from 4-6 December 2013.

Back to back to this conference, **the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” will organise on 3 December a High-Level Conference on the Implementation of the Messages from la Réunion in 2008.**

Fabienne Couapel-Sauret, Vice-President of la Réunion

Fabienne Couapel-Sauret sought to bring some “nuances” to the positions and views expressed before her intervention by giving some examples of actions undertaken in the Reunion Island and which could serve as model for other ORs and OCTs.



20 years after the first Rio Summit, sustainable development has become an imperative that is not anymore only understood by experts but which has become a highly politicised instrument. It is this political will that has, according to Mrs. Couapel, brought so many changes and advances in terms of biodiversity protection and actions against climate change effects and greenhouse gas emissions in the Reunion Island. *“It is thus normal and necessary to not put aside this important political involvement and to even do anything in our mean to transcend and support it,”* she said.

Member States and their regions have shown that they can have a global strategic vision. The ambition of the Reunion Island is to become a green, solar and sustainable island: it is one of the world’s 34 biodiversity hotspots, and which holds over 30% of primary ecosystems. *“We need to look at terrestrial biodiversity, marine biodiversity, energy mixes, transport issues, i.e. to the environment as a whole, not as one issue detached from the other,”* said Mrs. Couapel.

The insularity of ORs and OCTs and their exceptional natural patrimony has been protected over the years and these islands have learnt to take advantage of these assets by leading a certain number of actions for the protection of marine and land biodiversity and more generally the environment.

After the Conference in 2008, for instance, the Island of La Réunion has been equipped with solar panels and is now a leader in terms of energy mixes for renewable energies (over 34%) – the island has 4 photovoltaic plants with a very large capacity. They have developed the idea of “eco-solidarity cheques” to help private users to install solar panels at home and to stock energy. The island has also developed a partnership with EDF to develop intelligent electrical systems: currently, a policy to valorise waste is being implemented.

La Réunion also supports several innovative projects in the area of marine biodiversity. *“Innovation should be given a key place in all these actions, as it is innovation that will create jobs for the future,”* highlighted Mrs. Couapel. *“Indeed, these islands suffer from average unemployment rates above 30%: these new orientations will allow to create new jobs linked to the protection of the environment.”*

Small associations have been doing a tremendous work in La Réunion thanks to the BEST Preparatory Action and [LIFE+ Programme](#). Their actions will continue to be supported and valorised by the Reunion Island and by the subsidies received from the EU.

In terms of regional cooperation, La Réunion has developed several partnerships with various neighbouring islands, such as Madagascar, putting in place actions to protect whales in the Indian Ocean. The Reunion Island strives to continue receiving



the support from various programmes at the EU level, and wishes that those could be expanded in the coming years.

In terms of transport and the greenhouse gas emissions that they cause, La Réunion will soon start the construction of a road along the coast, which will have a dedicated lane for public transports and for bicycles. This will contribute significantly to the creation of thousands of jobs and it has already been estimated that the island has reduced its GHG emissions by 18%.

Mrs. Couapel concluded her intervention by expressing her worry about the fact that if tomorrow the financial and political support is cut, it will be the social fabric that has been created by the small associations and thousands of jobs that will be lost. *“I share the other speakers’ preoccupation regarding the protection of biodiversity and the environment but I do not support the methodology, namely the creation of a platform overlapping one or two big associations acting as the spokesperson of the totality of the small associations that are spread across the world,”* she said. There cannot be a concrete realisation of our goals and of the potential of ORs and OCTs if there is no shared political will and the continued support of little associations.

Younous Omarjee, Member of European Parliament

MEP Younous Omarjee started his speech by saying that it is not a roundtable on the challenges of islands, but rather on the challenges the world is faced with. *“The islands are at the heart of global challenges: it is the first point we should be aware of when talking about small islands that suffer from poverty,”* said the French MEP from la Réunion. The European Union will not be able to respond to these challenges without the support of islands, he said. Biodiversity is a high stake for the humanity: we are currently facing the 6th wave of species’ extinction, which is impressively rapid and is a case of human predation for a large part. **If the European Union wants to contribute to the solution of this global problem and be faithful to a certain number of its values, the EU cannot remain outside the ring where the fight is taking place. The EU will only be able to play an active role if it looks at its overseas regions, countries and territories, where 70% of the EU’s biodiversity is concentrated.**

Recently, an important debate took place in the European Parliament on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), during which MEP Omarjee alerted on the fact that at today’s rate of exploitation, there won’t be any fish left for commercial fishing in the near future, which will have catastrophic economic consequences for small



islands. In order to reach the conservation objective, adequate means need to be given to European islands to take part in the solution of this global challenge.

Maintaining coral reefs in oceans is of utmost importance for preserving the biodiversity of islands. In times of crisis, heads of states, the EP and the Commission have a tendency to curl up to the limits of the Union, and thus to lose sight of the global ambitions. Yet, looking outwards is necessary to solve the problems linked to economic growth. *“We, representatives from the European Overseas, need to remind the EU that it should have a global ambition, which will help finding solutions for the problems on the European continent,”* said the MEP.

There are some visible incoherencies in several EU programmes: [Natura2000](#) is based on EU legislation which is not applicable to the OCTs. Regarding the BEST preparatory action, an additional 2 million Euros was allocated in 2013 thanks to MEPs Ponga, Tirolien and Omarjee, which is nonetheless a very limited envelope given the challenges at stake. *“We need to go much further,”* said the MEP.

The European Commission’s Communications [Europe’s Outermost Regions](#) and [Europe’s Overseas Countries and Territories](#) mention the impacts of climate change on small islands, the importance of biodiversity and its sustainable valorisation, the need for marine policies and policies for oceans, which is a notable progress; yet, Mr. Omarjee called for implementation of corresponding projects to the level of the promises made.

Scientists have made clear the need for reinforcement of observatory posts *in situ* to better understand climatic phenomena. It will therefore be crucial to lean on the EU’s overseas territories and to provide the necessary means to finance such research.

Developing of renewable energies is key to solving the problem of the energy bill, which is a common problem to the islands – be they ORs, OCTs or African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The key to the development of ACP countries is linked to this energy issue. European islands also have the responsibility of showing to their ACP neighbours easily applicable solutions on islands where all the conditions are brought together (water, wind, etc) for the objective of energy autonomy to be attained. **EU overseas can thus both bring a contribution to a global problem (the fight against climate change) and at the same time solve the internal problem of development.**

“If we do not invest now in policies towards climate change alleviation, the costs for adapting to climate change consequences will be far greater and far more complicated to implement. Inaction will have serious consequences on agriculture, fisheries and tourism, which are key sectors to the development of small islands,” concluded MEP Omarjee.



Patrice Tirolien, Member of European Parliament

MEP Patrice Tirolien underlined the importance of policies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources on islands. He also echoed the central role of islands in current discussion on climate change, even if just as key observers of its effects.

We are well aware of the obstacles to an optimum conservation of biodiversity and reasoned management of natural resources in environments such as island states – lack of financial means and expertise at the local level, remoteness from the poles of decision-making, lack of coherence and dialogue in the various geographical basins, etc.

It will only be once we have recognised this that the steps taken for the conservation and value creation of islands' natural wealth will be feasible, through political will and concerted action of national and local strategies. *"We need a global framework that can be adapted and used at the regional level,"* said the French MEP from Guadeloupe. *"Only such an approach will allow to pool the necessary means and coordination efforts of all the actors."*

Reinforced cooperation between ORs, OCTs and ACP countries will be key to a real regional integration. The EU has recognised several times the importance of this objective. The 2008 and 2012 Commission's communications on the position of the Outermost Regions in the European Union portrays these regions as outposts of Europe that reach out to ACP islands in their regions and that play a key role in their development.

In parallel, the future framework of association between the EU and the Overseas Countries and Territories sees regional cooperation as a central objective and will, in that respect, receive an important envelope under the European Development Fund (EDF). MEP Tirolien, who was rapporteur on this text in the EP, played a key role in putting this imperative at the heart of the reform.

Caribbean territories constitute a homogenous group in many aspects, in terms of culture, history and their climate: regional cooperation should be a greater reality than it is today. EU Member States have their share of responsibility in this, but seem to have now understood the importance of what is at stake in the region. Laurent Fabius, French Minister in charge of foreign and European affairs, recently confirmed his agreement for Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guyana (French Outermost regions) to become members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a regional body of the United Nations. These same three region are also about to obtain observer status in the CARICOM



(Caribbean Community), OECS (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States) and ACS (Association of Caribbean States).

These new platforms of dialogue will facilitate the implementation of concrete cooperation projects in identified fields, including the protection of the environment and biodiversity.

The OCTs should also benefit from considerable flexibility as they have access to same financial support as ACP countries, while enjoying an autonomy that will allow them to develop diplomatic ties proportional to their local competences. However, possibilities of joint financing between the EDF for OCTs and the EDF for ACP countries are limited, mainly due to shifted calendars.

Regarding the case of Outermost Regions, the question is even trickier: synergies between the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the EDF are even more complicated. Domains of possible cooperation for regional authorities are still limited and need an approval from the Member State. MEP Tirolien called for administrative simplification of the processes.

Yet, immediate action is possible in some areas: MEP Tirolien organises regularly meetings in Brussels with the Ambassadors from the Caribbean region around themes such as policies for cooperation with Europe. Their voice and inputs was heard and used when drafting the [EP report on the 11th EDF](#). MEP Tirolien also proposed a joint cooperation instrument for the Caribbean region under the form of an overall allocation by the ERDF and the EDF on the basis of a regional strategy on innovation, co-led by the different parties involved, which could finance regional cooperation programmes in the Caribbean region. Other regions such as the Indian Ocean and Oceania could use this example.

MEP Tirolien concluded by saying that: *“We ought to develop such solutions for the future generations.”*

Karin Zaunberger, DG Environment, European Commission

Karin Zaunberger underlined the fact that projects funded through the two open calls for proposals [BEST 2011 and 2012](#) implementing the two first years of the BEST Preparatory Action have helped raising the profile of ORs and OCTs in the international arena, notably through side-events organised at Rio+20 and the CBD COPs in Nagoya and Hyderabad.

2013 is the third and last year of the BEST preparatory action. In the first two years of the action, a number of projects have been funded with a wide geographical spread and a broad geo-political coverage. They include projects on the ground,



designation of protected areas, tackling invasive species, management of ecosystem services and the conservation of emblematic species. They also include a number of strategic projects with a regional coverage, notably a project on the quantification of ecosystem services of marine protected areas in the Caribbean and a project on the South Pacific Ocean eco-systemic analysis.

The biodiversity in EU overseas is extremely rich and vulnerable. Comparatively modest investments can already show significant positive impacts. The idea emerged in the La Réunion conference in 2008 that a dedicated, voluntary and durable scheme that facilitates smart access to funding based on existing instruments should be created. The BEST objective is to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in European overseas, which can then be broken down into a number of specific objectives, namely: biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of ecosystem services and ecosystem-based approaches for climate change adaptation and mitigation, the development of green infrastructure, but also capacity-building, networking, education, partnerships etc.

After two years of preparatory action, during which 2 million Euros per year were allocated to BEST, there is broad support for the initiative: Notably the European Parliament, without which this preparatory action would not exist. However, also Member States have also expressed support in several Environment Council Conclusions and the BEST preparatory action has been recognised on international level including through a reference in [decision CBD COP X/15 Review of the programme of work on island biodiversity](#). Some regional and international organisations have also recognised this initiative and are partners of on-going BEST projects. The French Development Agency (AFD) made available an additional 800.000€ for the BEST initiative in 2012, which allowed funding of 2 further projects which were on the reserve list of the previous call for proposals. In total 84 proposals were submitted to the two open calls for proposals in 2011-2012 from various players including local actors, researchers, Public-Private organisations, NGOs and International Organisations.

We are now in the third and last year of the BEST preparatory action: as the name says, it is a preparation for an initiative to stand on its own feet after three years of support. Intensive discussions have taken place on how to implement the last tranche of money. The European Commission has decided not to do a call for proposals like in the 2 previous years and to instead have an open call for tender aiming at 1 or 2 service contracts..

This implies a certain risk but at the same time it is also a challenge and opportunity to achieve the critical mass needed to make the BEST initiative sustainable beyond the lifetime of the BEST preparatory action. The funds disbursed until now to support projects under the preparatory action were not sufficient to fulfil all needs



and many proposals could not be funded . This demonstrates the need for a sustainable mechanism. *“A successful offer to the call for tender will require strong partnerships and clever collaboration, but also solidarity and looking for the right synergies through smart networking. The aim is to create a critical mass that can no longer be ignored,”* said Ms. Zaunberger.

The milestones of the third year of the BEST preparatory action: the Commission’s financing decision was adopted on 16 April 2013 and the open call for tender was launched on the 2nd of May 2013. The publication on TED is usually 12 days after the launch. **The deadline for submission is the 2nd of September 2013.**

More information:

Measures towards sustaining the BEST preparatory action to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in EU outermost regions and overseas countries and territories

The open call for tender has been published on 14 May 2013.

Theo Saramandis, DG Development Cooperation, European Commission

Theo Saramandis informed the audience about the Commission’s current discussion with the 27 Member States in the Council on the proposal for the Overseas Association Decision (OAD) post-2013, only a few weeks after the European parliament has adopted a [legislative resolution](#) in which it underlines the importance of this mutually beneficial partnership between the EU and its overseas territories. The EP has highlighted in its resolution the importance of biodiversity, sustainable development and the environment as being central issues of this relation.

Insularity and remoteness constitute a serious threat, which has led a large number of OCTs to a certain degree of endemism and thus placed them at the centre of the discussions on how to halt biodiversity loss.

OCTs have consistently taken up measures to preserve their natural capital, but they remain vulnerable in the face of various environmental challenges – climate change, waste management, as well as threats on their fauna and flora.

The EU is a key partner to OCTs in terms of capacity building to respond to environmental challenges. This partnership will intensify following the OAD post-2013. This document provides particular attention to the questions of environment and vulnerability. It explicitly recognises the terrestrial and marine biodiversity of the OCTs, and the threats that climate change poses on them. It seeks to ensure the



conservation, the restoration and the sustainable use of the biological diversity and ecosystem services of these territories.

Environmental protection is also identified in the OAD as representing one of the sustainable development pillars of the OCTs. Among the priority cooperation areas, promotion of green growth is promoted, as well as adaptation to and reduction of the impacts of climate change. An entire chapter is dedicated to these topics, offering several collaboration possibilities between the EU and OCTs around the areas of renewable energy, sustainable management of forests, coastal areas, fish stocks and waste.

The Commission has also sought in its resolution to promote OCTs' participation in regional and international initiative networks. *"The OAD post-2013 is conducive to the development of a fruitful collaboration between the EU and the OCTs,"* said Mr. Saramandis. Furthermore, the EDF could increase possibilities for OCTs to receive funds for environmental initiatives. The technical cooperation facility has also funded projects in the area of the environment under the 10th EDF. Funding for environmental projects and conservation on natural resources in the OCTs can be traced back to even before the 8th EDF.

Starting in 2013, the idea is to put the concept of "sustainable development" at the heart of the relations between the EU and OCTs. The BEST initiative provides promising examples in terms of possible actions to be undertaken. Mr. Saramandis concluded by expressing his hope that the ongoing discussions on the available funds under the 11th EDF will allow to dispose of the necessary envelopes to undertake actions that will implement the OAD's objectives of sustainable development.

Jérôme Petit, DG Development Cooperation, European Commission

Jérôme Petit said that *"there is a clear understanding from the part of the European Commission of the issue and importance of biodiversity in the EU OCTs."* New Caledonia alone (a French OCT) is one of the world's five biodiversity hotspots. 10% of the world's coral reefs are in French Polynesia. The EU has the largest Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) in the world, with 15 million km². Most extinction is occurring on islands and most of the endangered species are also located on islands. The heritage that European overseas offers to continental Europe is huge in terms of biodiversity.

DG DEVCO has understood the strong links that exist between biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods on OCTs, which are extremely dependent on their natural resources. Tourism is the first sector for revenues in most of these islands, so there is



also an imperative to protect this biodiversity, which is the number one factor attracting tourists. The fishing and agriculture industry is not as developed as it is on the continent; biodiversity protection is also part of a cultural heritage.

“If we are to provide sustainable livelihoods to people on islands and ensure economic growth, we have to invest on their natural capital,” said Mr. Petit.

“Life, Lives, Livelihoods” provides an overview of the biodiversity and development portfolio of DG DEVCO, one of the biggest donors for global biodiversity conservation – DG DEVCO allocated 200 million Euros per year since 2002 for biodiversity related-activities globally. 40% is allocated to core biodiversity activities, such as support to protected areas, ecological corridor, monitoring species; 50% is allocated to biodiversity mainstreamed in other sector, such as the link to food security, to climate change through ecosystem-based adaptation projects, to economic growth through payments to ecosystem services; and 10% allocated to global biodiversity governance, such as the TEEB report, the BIOFIN project with UNDP, support to the CBD and direct support to CITES.

80% of the biodiversity portfolio in DEVCO is coming from national and geographical envelopes (the EDF for instance). These envelopes are demand-driven, in line with the aid-effectiveness declaration. Governments in OCTs and ACP countries decide what they want to achieve with EU investments and decisions are made through policy dialogue. There is crucial role to play in lobbying and advocacy, especially in agencies that have strong links with local governments, said Mr. Petit. The other 20% come from thematic budget lines, which is less demand-driven.

The EU also participated in a multi-donor trust fund (CEPF model) with 18 million Euros in 2013, and islands are also recipients of this money. Another initiative is the GCCA (Global Climate Change Alliance) where the Commission participates with an envelope of 250 million Euros for 5 years and for very concrete actions in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small-Islands Developing States (SIDS). The Seafish programme for the sustainable exploitation of fish in the Pacific promotes regional cooperation and coordination of policies. Beyond BEST, there are other programmes and a significant amount of money allocated to biodiversity on islands.

We are currently in the middle of programming for the next financial period (2014-2020); at this point, everything is still under discussion. Yet, some indications are already available: 20% of the total EU budget will be allocated to climate change, and hopefully this will be shared in every budget line, including cooperation and regional development budget. “National envelopes – European Development Fund – are still under negotiation, and we all have a strong role to play in defining the strategies,” he argued.

The thematic budget lines will be merged in a single budget line called Global Public Goods and Challenges, with the idea of breaking the silos between the different



sectors and to provide common answers to the international challenges. The total available envelope is 5 billion Euros in a period of 7 years for this budget line.

Mr. Petit concluded by saying that there is a strong interest in DG DEVCO on BEST; DEVCO co-financed the Conference of La Réunion in 2008. BEST is under the Global Public Goods and Challenges envelope: however, its financing is not yet secured and concrete actions are needed to ensure its implementation. As food for thought, Mr. Petit said that: *“We believe that the CEPF model of a multi-donor trust fund is a perfect model for initiatives such as BEST to continue existing.”*

Pascale Wolfcarius, DG Regional Policy, European Commission

Pascale Wolfcarius argued that there is indeed room of improvement when it comes to the main drivers for growth in the Outermost Regions and the coordination of EDF and ERDF instruments. For instance, the horizontal action called “Neighbouring Plan” which seeks to develop a better regional integration of the ORs with ACP neighbouring countries is one of the areas where the European Commission seeks to improve its work.

When it comes to the EU Strategy to the adaptation to Climate Change, the European Commission is also aware that there are a number of areas where it needs to think deeper, such as sustainability criteria for projects, the integration of adaptation and climate change issues in development regional policies, and the bottom-up approach to foster wider reflection at the regional and local levels on the strategic axis for the development of initiatives.

Crucial discussions, such as the next budget lines and thematic objectives, are currently taking place and financial means are being identified to allow the development of European policies. Discussions are also ongoing on the next financial programming and the structural funds: these funds contribute to a large extent to the development of the objectives linked to the environment and other thematic issues. One-third of these envelopes are given for co-financing of local environment project.

Parallel to these discussions, the European Commission is trying to involve Member States in developing partnership agreements with the ORs to give a concrete content to the legal and regulatory objectives of the Union.

Debate and Q&A:



An unidentified participant in the audience raised the issue that during the presentations there was no mention made of the LIFE instrument, it being one of the key demands formulated by the European Parliament to open the LIFE instrument to the OCTs. Does the European Commission agree that the LIFE instrument should be open to the OCTs?

Ms. Zaunberger answered that the position of the Commission remains that LIFE is not the appropriate instrument for the OCTs. Yet, negotiations are ongoing and an offer is on the table regarding this issues. One of the ideas for having OCTs eligible for LIFE+ is in view of sustaining the BEST initiative. An interesting alternative proposal was made by the Commission in this regard.

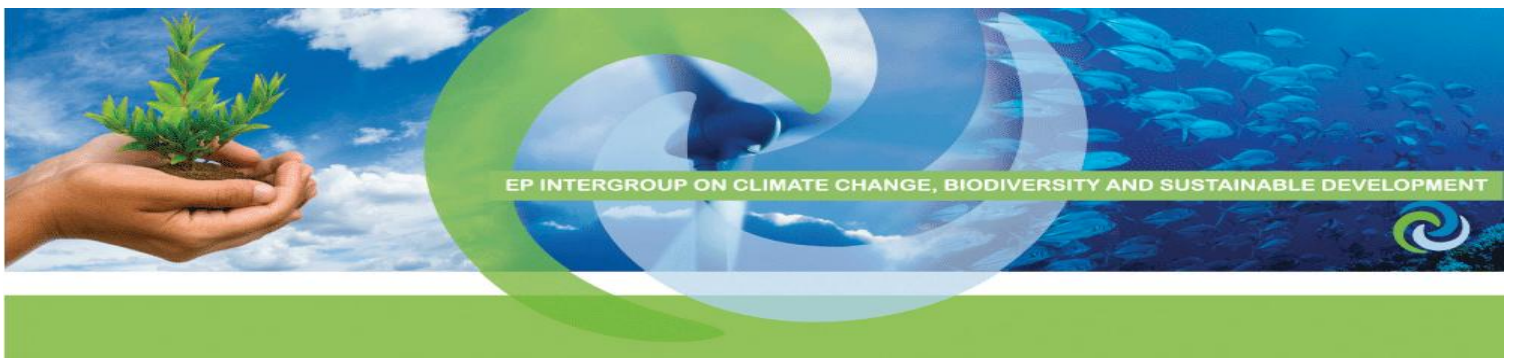
Ms. Martinez said that budgetary talks have been ongoing since the beginning of the year and that the possibility of creating a trust fund was raised. Knowing that access to European funds is not always easy for ORs and OCTs, what is the Commission's position regarding the creation of such a trust fund?

Mr. Petit answered that for the future of BEST it is still under discussion so no definite position can be given at this stage. There is nonetheless a work in progress among the different DGs and a multi-donor trust fund could be envisaged where DG DEVCO would give money for OCTs, DG REGIO would give money for ORs, and Member States could pitch in – France has already expressed interest in this. A steering committee would define the strategic orientations of investments; yet, the European Commission does not usually manage such small envelopes and contracts, an intermediary body should be envisaged to take that place between the Commission and NGOs or the private sector in the field. The CEPF model could be copied: it has a secretariat that ensures that contractual role.

Conclusions by Ambassador Ronny Jumeau

GLISPA is a unique partnership in terms of the role that it has. The world is at a crossroads now in terms of sustainable development and climate change as we move from Rio+20 into the post-2015 development agenda. GLISPA, with the help of The Nature Conservancy, organised one of the most successful side-events in Rio on Oceans' Leadership. We cannot talk about oceans without talking about islands, and vice versa. Oceans were the big winner at Rio+20. GLISPA managed to attract the leaders of the world's major island states such as Indonesia and Australia. Indonesia has 17,000 islands.

Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin, will host leaders of island states of the Caribbean and OCTA members, as well as CEOs of top companies such as Coca-Cola, in the



Virgin islands as part of the [Caribbean Challenge Initiative](#) that was born out of GLISPA, to discuss sustainable development, island biodiversity, etc. The message will be: *“you have made a lot of money from islands and the Caribbean sea, now it is time you come and listen to how you can contribute to the sustainable development of islands.”*

The crisis affects funding for projects and assistance; with the help of NGO consultants, several islands in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean are now putting together “debt for adaptation swaps” – to exchange debt to protect coastal and marine environments. The climate change debate, the economic crisis and the high indebtedness of some countries are being brought all into one island package around marine biodiversity. A package is being prepared in the Seychelles to exchange \$86 million of debt (a country of 90.000 in habitants) to raise from philanthropic foundations and other organisations in the world \$52 million to turn 30% of Seychelles’ EEZ into MPAs, and out of it 15% into no-take fishing zones.

“Innovative thinking will be key to turning the debt of islands and the burden it creates for their future development into sustainable development ventures. What can we lose from that?” he concluded.

The third international conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will be held in September 2014 in Samoa. 2014 will be the UN International Year for Small Island States.

“This is the time for the islands across the globe to step up and step forward on common issues to ensure that island biodiversity, marine and coastal biodiversity, the future regime that is being discussed for the oceans remain an integral part of this global debate post-2015.”