

Strengthening Opportunities and Decision-Making for Sustainable Management of Islands

New Database Brings Together Vital Data on Biodiversity to Climate Change Covering 70,000 Islands

New York, 10 May 2010--A pioneering new database, bringing together for the first time information from biodiversity and climate change to social and economic factors covering some 70,000 islands, was launched today.

The Global Island Database (GID) is aimed at boosting sustainable management of the often unique and rich nature-based assets found on islands across the globe.

It will also assist island governments to play a more central and pivotal role in international negotiations and decision-making in respect to the management of scarce resources, including at the upcoming meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan in October.

The database, which has been developed by the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) in conjunction with partners, in response to a request from the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), was unveiled today at the UN-Commission on Sustainable Development's celebrations for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Its launch coincides with the release of the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3) by the UNEP-linked Convention on Biological Diversity as part of the 2010 UN International Year of Biodiversity.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: *"High quality databases are crucial for addressing both the threats to biodiversity and economically-important ecosystems, while maximizing the development opportunities from a more intelligent and sustainable management of these natural and nature-based assets"*.

"Islands may only cover three per cent of the global land area, but they are a treasure trove of biodiversity and home to some of the rarest and most unique species that in turn hold valuable genetic resources. The 20th century was an industrial age: the 21st century will increasingly be a biological one. The importance of this database for island nations cannot be over stated, and is long overdue," he added.

The GID (<http://gid.unep-wcmc.org/index.html>) represents part of a "kit" being launched by the CBD and UN-DESA as part of these events, which calls attention to how the GBO-3 is useful to SIDS and provides a list of tools and links for assisting SIDS to include biodiversity issues in their development plans

"The GID not only allows the visualisation of data relevant for islands but also provides added-value through contextual information, data analyses and a networking platform for organizations to upload information about themselves and their work" said Francine



Kershaw, GID project lead at UNEP-WCMC. *“This beta version provides an excellent baseline and we are actively seeking partners and collaborators to help us build upon the GID in order to best serve the island community.”*

UNEP-WCMC is a partner in the GLISPA, a mechanism to implement the CBD’s island biodiversity programme of Work (IBPoW). UNEP-WCMC committed to working with GLISPA to develop the GID and a strategy for maximising its utility, accessibility and relevancy to inform and advance the global island debate, and to support decision-makers and island resource managers, in direct response to the CBD’s IBPoW, adopted in 2006. The GID has been developed in order to directly reflect five of the themes important for islands, as identified by the IBPoW, namely biodiversity, climate change, invasive species, pollution and sustainability.

“The need for a tool like the Global Island Database was one of the original gaps identified by GLISPA and it is going to be extremely useful for island countries and countries with islands, as well as others to help to develop regional and global strategies related to islands” said Kate Brown, Coordinator of the Global Island Partnership.

Funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through UNEP, the GID has been under development since 2008 and already represents a multi-partner initiative with strong links to the Global Islands Network (GIN), as well as IUCN’s Species Survival Commission’s (SSC) Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) and the Pacific Ecosystems at Risk (PIER) project.

Support is now being sought for the next phase of development, where priorities include expanding the existing partner-base in order to strengthen the current data-holdings, with particular emphasis on filling the significant gaps in present island information, provide a greater number of analysis products aimed at answering specific policy questions, and actively encourage networking between organisations working on similar issues in order to strengthen capacity within island regions.

For more information on the Global Islands Database, please contact:

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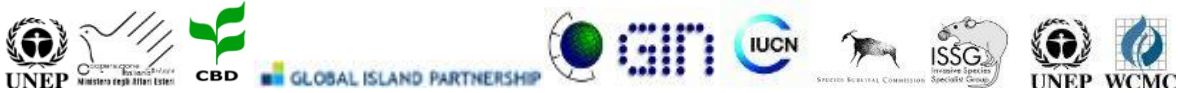
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INFORMATION FOR EDITORS



Islands represent merely 3% of the global land area yet are home to disproportionate levels of the world's biodiversity with many unique species existing only on a single or related group of islands. However, island species are also among some of the most threatened. Their high levels of endemism and generally small population sizes make them particularly vulnerable to human and natural disturbance events and as such they have exponentially greater extinction rates compared to the mainland. Continued loss of this biodiversity is of global importance. Many species have critical ecosystem roles and island societies depend largely on local biodiversity - whether terrestrial, freshwater or marine - for their livelihoods as well as their social and cultural significance.

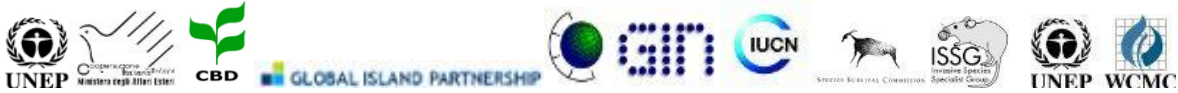
The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) is the biodiversity assessment and biodiversity policy support arm of the United Nations Environment Programme, the world's foremost intergovernmental environmental organisation. The Centre has been in operation for over 25 years, providing objective, scientifically rigorous products and services to help decision makers recognise the value of biodiversity and apply this knowledge to all that they do. The Centre's core business is locating data about biodiversity and its conservation, interpreting and analysing that data to provide assessments and policy analysis, and making the results available to both national and international decision makers and businesses.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), established in 1972, is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. To accomplish this, UNEP works with a wide range of partners, including United Nations entities, international organisations, national governments nongovernmental organisations, the private sector and civil society.

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Environment Programme of its Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) "Cooperazione Italiana allo Sviluppo", invests significantly on projects specifically aimed at supporting islands. Over 10 million Euros per year have been spent for their conservation, sustainable development, disaster management and risk-preparedness in the last five years.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the (CBD) is dedicated to promoting sustainable development. The Convention was inspired by the world community's growing commitment to sustainable development. It represents a dramatic step forward in the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The Convention has now been ratified by 193 Parties, including all SIDS.

The Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) assists islands in addressing one of the world's greatest challenges: to conserve and sustainably utilize the invaluable island natural resources that support people, cultures, and livelihoods in their island homes around the



world. It brings together island nations and nations with islands — small and large, developing and developed — to mobilize leadership, increase resources and share skills, knowledge, technologies and innovations in a cost-effective and sustainable way that will catalyze action for conservation and sustainable livelihoods on islands. It is recognised by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as a partnership to advance the implementation of the CBD 2010 biodiversity target, to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, and the programmes of work on island biodiversity and protected areas.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and its predecessors have helped countries around the world meet their economic, social and environmental challenges for more than 50 years. DESA's mission – to promote development for all – reflects a fundamental concern for equity and equality in countries large and small, developed and developing.

The Global Islands Network (GIN) is a Scottish based charity established in 2002 whose main aim is to conduct and promote culturally appropriate, ecologically sound, economically sustainable and socially equitable development on islands worldwide. GIN presently comprises 146 partner organisations spread over 60 countries and has built up formal working collaborations with a range of UN agencies and international bodies. An active member of the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) with a central goal to help implement the priority actions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Island Biodiversity Programme of Work (IBPoW) which was formally adopted at its 8th Conference of the Parties (COP8) meeting in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.

The Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) is a global network of scientific and policy experts on invasive species, organized under the auspices of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The ISSG aims to reduce threats to natural ecosystems and the native species they contain by increasing awareness of invasive alien species, and of ways to prevent, control or eradicate them. The three core activity areas of the ISSG are technical advice, information exchange and networking.