



## CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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### CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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Item 16 of the provisional agenda\*

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON THE FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE SECRETARIAT AND THE BUDGET FOR THE TRUST FUNDS OF THE CONVENTION

#### *Follow-up report on the fellowship programme*

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The present note provides a follow-up report on the fellowship programme of the Secretariat, referred to in section III C of the report of the Executive Secretary on the financial and administrative performance of the Secretariat and the budget for the trust funds of the Convention (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/10).
2. The fellowship programme was initiated in 2002 with the aim of offering nationals from developing countries the opportunity to gain knowledge in the area of biodiversity in order to assist their organizations and communities in protecting and promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It was expected that the fellows would use this opportunity to broaden their professional knowledge and experience on issues they are working on in their countries by acquainting themselves with the issues facing biodiversity conservation and sustainable use worldwide.
3. Fabián Pina Amargós from Cuba, was one of the selected candidates to this programme. He works at the “Centro de Investigaciones de Ecosistemas Costeros” (CIEC), in Cayo Coco, Cuba. During his fellowship with the Secretariat, Mr. Amargós worked on the thematic area of marine and coastal biodiversity. The issues he covered included: sustainable use of marine resources; rapid assessment of coral reefs and marine and coastal protected areas (including community involvement in marine and coastal protected areas, etc.). After completion of his fellowship, Mr. Amargós has been working primarily on a project called “Establishment and Conservation of the National Park Jardines de la Reina”. A follow-up report to the Secretariat, on work being done by Mr. Amargós on this project is annexed to the present note. Appended to the report is an evaluation of the fellowship programme submitted by Mr. Amargós.
4. The follow-up report exemplifies the importance of the fellowship programme in educating environmental practitioners on the issues related to biodiversity conservation and use, which can be

\* UNEP/CBD/COP/7/1 and Corr.1.

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carried forth into national level implementation. Given the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, as recognized by the Parties to the Convention, the report brings together issues related to integrated marine and coastal area management, marine protected areas and environmental awareness.

5. The Secretariat wishes Mr. Amargós and his team much success in establishing Jardines de la Reina as a marine protected area, which will uphold the principles enshrined in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

*Annex*

**FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON THE WORK OF FABIÁN PINA AMARGÓS, FORMER PARTICIPANT IN THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. About 50 miles off the southeast coast of Cuba, roughly a thousand square miles of reefs, mangrove swamps and islands, are known collectively as Jardines de la Reina (the Garden of the Queen). This area is closely guarded and accessed by only a few Cuban lobster boats, foreign divers and light-tackle fishers. Strictly enforced government laws against poaching protect the area (in 1996, it was declared, under a Ministry of Fisheries law, “*zona bajo régimen especial de uso y protección*” which is similar to the internationally recognized marine reserves).
2. Since 1996, much research has been conducted in the area to understand and learn about the natural resources and the role of this marine reserve in nature conservation. Amongst these, the results of two projects, one led by the *Centro de Investigaciones de Ecosistemas Costeros* (CIEC) and the other by *Instituto de Oceanología* (OI), are worthy of particular mention.
3. These results include:
  - (a) The fore reefs have high species diversity, well preserved benthic communities and some of the most spectacular fish assemblages of the world;
  - (b) The area boasts excellent sea-water conditions and weather for practising outdoor and underwater activities. Despite the fact that habitat quality is better outside the marine reserve than inside, the fish assemblages are better inside which is, at least in part, due to the level of protection.
  - (c) New taxa for Cuba and the world have been discovered in both, terrestrial and marine habitats and many charismatic species occur there.
4. These circumstances support the decision to propose Jardines de la Reina as a national park. Since 2002, a project funded by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba and World Wildlife Fund Canada is being carried out. It is called “Establishment and conservation of the National Park Jardines de la Reina”. Mr. Amargos was hired as chief of the project and the following activities have been undertaken, mostly upon his return to Cuba after completing his fellowship with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

**II. REPORT BY MR. FABIAN PINA AMARGÓS**

**A. *Tasks carried out after finishing my Fellowship award***

5. As leader of the project “Establishment and conservation of the National Park Jardines de la Reina”, I have coordinated and been involved with the following:
  - (a) Work planning and preparation of the management plan;
  - (b) Administrative infrastructure and protection of the area;
  - (c) Environmental education and dissemination;
  - (d) Management of the project.

*Work planning and preparation of the management plan.*

6. On 14 March 2003, I organized a meeting to discuss databases, geographic information systems and digital mapping at the Environmental Agency. In that meeting, experts from CIEC, Centro de Investigaciones Medioambientales de Camagüey (CIMAC), Centro Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CNAP), Centro de Estudios de Informática y Sistemas (CEIS) and the Instituto de Geografía Tropical (IGT) attended. After an introduction and two presentations by CNAP and CEIS we agreed to use the databases proposed by CEIS on flora and fauna supported by CIEC, CIMAC and CNAP; use the

information system of CNAP for administrative and socio-economic matters as well as develop the digital mapping by IGT, CIMAC and CNAP.

7. Also in March, we organized and carried out visits to the Cuban provinces of Camagüey, Sancti Spiritus and Ciego de Ávila. The objectives of these visits were to introduce the project to the stakeholders, assign different tasks and re-evaluate the tasks assigned previously. About 45 people from 15 institutions of the three provinces participated in these meetings.

8. The Workshop on Environmental Issues of Jardines de la Reina was carried out on 1-2 April 2003, and involved the participation of 35 experts of about 20 institutions from the three provinces. It was organized and conducted by the Board of Directors of the project. Discussions on the environmental issues of the area included detecting weaknesses, strengths, threats and opportunities of the area. Many recommendations were proposed to solve the negative aspects and promote the positive ones.

9. As the main issue of this phase, the management plan is being developed. I have led the elaboration of the first draft with the collaboration of some experts. The diagnostic part with the characterization of the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects and the analysis of the environmental issues have been completed. The normative and programmatic parts with the statement of the objectives and indicators of success and the preparation of the various management programmes, respectively, have also been finished. The maps that support the text are being prepared. By the time when this report will be issued, the first draft will be ready for a review of the stakeholders in order to finish the management plan in a meeting to take place by the beginning of September.

10. Due to the international relevance of this place, the proposed director of the National Park and I are preparing a file to submit to UNESCO the proposal of Jardines de la Reina as a Natural Heritage Site.

#### *Administrative infrastructure and protection of the area*

11. On 18 June 2003, the office of this project was opened in the facilities of *Azulmar*, a major tourist operator in Jardines de la Reina and a close supporter of this effort. The opening was attended by about 50 people representing several political, community, environmental and government organizations of the village of Júcaro, Venezuela municipality, Ciego de Ávila and Camagüey provinces. Mr. Michael Bleimsrieder, representative of WWF Canada in Cuba was also present. The organization and coordination of the foundation were under my supervision.

12. In order to start the protection of the area, a technician of the CIEC, trained by me, was appointed for this project, at the beginning of 2002, which he has successfully performed since then. I also participated in the hiring of an expert who, after the official declaration of the Park, will become the Director of it. We are also looking for people from Júcaro who can work as Park rangers.

#### *Environmental education and dissemination.*

13. Several environmental education and dissemination activities have been carried out in the last six months with the direct participation of about 500 people. In Júcaro we have had various meetings with representative of the elementary school, women, neighbours, fishermen and government organizations. *Azulmar* offered ways to stimulate the interest of the local children and a cultural contest was organized by the future director of the Park and myself. Six special prizes, eleven prizes and twenty three mentions were awarded. The winners of the first two categories were also awarded a one-day-trip to Jardines de la Reina thanks to the generosity of *Azulmar*. The trip included a visit to the mangrove forests, a boat ride to see reef sharks in their natural habitats and various talks on the plans for sustainable use of these resources. These children are the future stakeholders and users of the resources in this region and will have a direct impact on it and it is therefore important for them to be involved with conservation and sustainable use efforts.

14. During the months of May and June we visited Venezuela and Baraguá, municipalities of Ciego de Ávila whose coasts face to the south of Cuba and for that reason are the most related to Jardines de la Reina. Our objective was to inform them and their respective Municipal Administrative Councils, of the project. On the 5 June, World Environment Day, I did a presentation about the natural resources, benefits

of conservation and the development of the National Park Jardines de la Reina in a very important meeting of dive operators ExpoBuceo 2003 in Varadero to an audience of 150 people.

15. The media has covered the project and Jardines de la Reina on many occasions. I was interviewed about the project by Agencia de Información Nacional (AIN), which was broadcast at least twice on national radio stations (Radio Reloj y Radio Enciclopedia) during April and May. At the beginning of June, the municipal Radio Morón and the national Radio Progreso also did broadcasts on the project. I was interviewed again in June by the provincial newspaper *Invasor* and it published an article about the kind of tourism developed in Jardines de la Reina. During the opening of the office in Júcaro journalists were invited from AIN, Radio Taíno, Radio Surco and the *Invasor* newspaper and we gave over 10 interviews, which have been widely broadcast at the provincial and national levels.

16. I organized the selection of pictures to prepare educative materials such as postcards, a poster and a booklet. Approximately 300 T-shirts were printed with the logos of WWF, the project (designed by a local artist) and the National System of Protected Areas (Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas). I also prepared the draft script for a video about Jardines de la Reina which, is going to be made by Televisión Avileña, the provincial television station.

#### *Management of the project*

17. The Board of Directors, made up of representatives of CNAP, CIEC, Camagüey (CIMAC) and Ciego de Ávila (CIEC), has held 11 meetings and conducted the project in a proper manner, accomplishing the objectives and tasks as per the plan of the project. The financial and other resources have been used efficiently and properly.

#### *Future of the National Park Jardines de la Reina*

18. I could consider this as a preparation phase of an effective management of the area. One second phase would include the tasks recommended in the Management Plan. In this way, we will gradually accomplish the goal of conserving Jardines de la Reina for future generations.

#### *Other tasks*

19. Other tasks include:

- (a) Participation as professor in the Master on Integrated Coastal Zone Management at Havana University;
- (b) Preparation and sending of a proposal for my Ph.D;
- (c) Preparation of articles to be published on Marine Science Congress Marcuba 2003, Workshop on Coastal Zone and Marine Researches magazine.

#### *Appendix*

### **EVALUATION BY MR. AMARGÓS**

“The Fellowship at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been a very valuable and important experience for me. Working on different fields gave me the opportunity to learn a lot about them. I was able to conduct extensive research for information on my main fields of expertise (ichthyology, marine ecology and marine and coastal protected areas), which is going to have a high positive impact in my present and future work in Cuba and in my Ph.D. work as well. The comments I have received for my presentations and documents have given me valuable inputs, ideas and guidance for the development of my research approach and will definitely contribute positively to my future research”.

“Indeed, the results reached in the last six months have the stamp of my Fellowship award at the SCBD because I have applied knowledge and skills learned there related to marine and coastal protected areas, management techniques and communication skills – all very valuable for my role on the project Establishment and conservation of the National Park Jardines de la Reina”.