

Maria Marina Silva
Minster for Environment, Brazil

(transcribed from video footage)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I should like to welcome you all, to greet you all, and in particular, our host the President of Palau, a champion of conservation. It is a pleasure to have him here at our Conference of the Parties.

It is impressive to see the conservation efforts being undertaken by the islands and their people, their leaders and also very impressive to see how we all care about conservation efforts that are happening all over the world.

When we talk about small islands, we run the risk of thinking they are fragile because they are small, and that this frailty will lead to the destruction of the environment. The problem is that the frailty is not just associated with small islands – large countries are also frail. My country has eight million square kilometers, and five of those encompass the Amazon forest. These huge dimensions mean absolutely nothing with respect to their frailty – they can be as frail as these islands. A measure of this frailty is in how we can conserve these natural resources, be it in the Amazon or in these islands.

It is for this reason that since the beginning of President Lula's administration, President of Palau, we have sought to work with three major guidelines. These guidelines are very strong to me because they are the ones that provide the foundation for our day to day work in public policy. One of them I have mentioned repeatedly here at the Conference of the Parties. And that is to have a cross-cutting environmental policy that is present in the various sectors and actions of all other government areas. And the others are essential for our work including for our goals of protecting biodiversity.

So I will just mention them briefly because this is more of an exchange of experiences here. I have found it very interesting to hear the important work being done in the islands in the conservation of biodiversity. One that is very dear to me is the social participation and control in the formulation of policies, in the implementation of policies, and also in the correction of those same policies. And the others are with respect to the structure for environmental information, the institutional structure. And lastly, sustainable development, because although we want to conserve biodiversity, we also want to promote social inclusion and livelihoods for our people.

And that's why I am very happy to be here and see the work of the President of Palau, the work that is being done with the communities; not only the local ones but the communities of the whole planet. And our apparent frailties will result in being strengthened here because of our ethical commitments to conservation efforts. Sustainability with respect to its economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects and particularly to its ethical aspects. I always say that we already have most of the answers to the technical problems and social problems that we face. What we need to do is to have an ethical commitment to put in service of our sustainability efforts.

And thank you very much and today at our last session, the delegate from Pakistan said wouldn't it be wonderful if we had all the presidents here so that we could really make them aware of the issues that concern us. And I said that even though they weren't here, our presidents and leaders weren't here, I am sure that they are not indifferent or insensitive to what we are saying here. So I want to apologise here to my friend, the President of Palau, for not having said that we did have a president here participating from the very beginning until the end. And now we will be able to go home and to our Government, to our President and say that we had a president and a vice president following closely our work at the conference and perhaps some day we won't have Ministers of Agriculture, of Technology, of Environment, but instead we will have presidents,

Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A Global Partnership
COP 8 High Level Event 28 March 2006
Curitiba, Brazil

championing, present at the conference, it will become so important that the presidents will come and champion the idea of sustainability.

And lastly, I should like to embrace you all with the words of an American writer that I like very much, who said that we are all angels with one wing, and to be able to fly, we need to be embraced. And I should like that we should all lend out wings to the convention so that it can fly all over the world, be it from the small islands, Micronesia, Brazil, the Amazon, and all over.

Thank you very much.