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Diplomatic Counsellor of the Minister of Environment and Territory, Italy

Excellencies, Ministers, distinguished colleagues; I know it is very late. I will be very, very short. Just allow me to say a few words about an Italian initiative which I believe, we believe to be relevant to what we celebrate tonight, the Global Island Partnership.

Italy with a total surface area of 300,000 square kilometers has over 7,500 kilometers of coastline and a number of large and small island archipelagoes, and even towns like Venice which are built at sea level. And this probably explains the historic Italian support to island nations, and how now more than ever with the current climate trends, Italy shares many of the administrative concerns and the conservation and development challenges island states face.

At Johannesburg Summit in 2002, together with Ecuador, Yemen and UNDP, the Italian Development Corporation launched a multi-million dollar Socotra-Galapagos Type 2 Partnership Initiative to assist developing nations with institutional responsibilities on islands towards enhancing their capacity to design and implement more systemic, effective, and sustainable development strategies. Strategies that fully take into account the importance of biological diversity and ecosystem functions and services together with the functional links with the social and economic upgrading of island societies.

Building on this spirit, then at the Mauritius Conference in 2004, the Italian Development Corporation together with the Director General for Nature Conservation of the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory formally opened this partnership to all small island developing states in order to share with them the Galapagos- Socotra islands partnership capacity building and technology transfer contributions. In this framework and with additional resources, a number of projects are already on their way.

It is now with great interest that we welcome the idea of the Global Island Partnership as an important tool to support the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity. We are convinced that such a Global Island Partnership has the potential to boost our World Summit Type 2 Island Partnership Initiative. We look forward to exploring with all interested parties the way to translate this collaborative concept into concrete action with coherent and complementary benefits to our shared conservation and development pursuits.

Tonight, I'm glad to announce that Italy is prepared to open widely the Initiative launched at the Mauritius Conference, and open it to the Global Island Partnership. And open its offer of a facility in the island of the Maddalena. The island of the Maddalena is by the way in front of an Italian town called Palau. This is true. This is not a joke. Palau is the name of a town in Sardinia which is exactly in front of the island of Maddalena.

This facility, which we are glad to open to the Global Island Partnership, will be dedicated to the training, the transfer of knowledge, the exchange of lessons learned for the sustainable management of the islands ecosystems.

Kom, kemal, mesulang, thank you very much.