

SVGs statement at the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) CBD COP9 – High Level Event - Bonn Germany – May 27, 2008

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) located in the Eastern Caribbean approximately 150 km west of Barbados. Although limited by its small size, its biodiversity is still significant. It has 84 km. of coastline, with diverse ecosystems including bays, beaches, rocky shores, cays and coral reefs. The country also has significant stands of tropical rain forest, 13% of which is primary forest, that are critical wildlife habitat areas. There are 15 species of mammals, 111 species of birds, including the endemic St. Vincent Parrot (*Amazona guildingi*), 16 species of reptiles, and 4 species of amphibians.

This biodiversity is however under threat from deforestation, species introductions, emigrants, exotic pests/diseases, limited knowledge, agrochemical use, hunting, inadequate enforcement, and urban development. In the Marine environment, threats include pollution, unsustainable fishing practices and the destruction of marine habitats such as mangroves and coral reefs. Despite the understanding the seriousness of these threats, SVG faces the reality of grappling with economic and social development issues while at the same time trying to address environmental concerns.

SVG, like many other Caribbean Islands, has a fragmented approach to biodiversity conservation or other obligations under the CBD. No single Ministry has the sole responsibility for implementing the CBD and there is no comprehensive legislative framework. Nevertheless, SVG has 23 terrestrial reserve areas, including the St. Vincent Parrot Reserve, several forest reserves, one marine park (Tobago Cays Marine Park), and six marine reserves. Limited technical and financial resources, however, severely hamper the active management of some of these areas. One notable exception is the Tobago Cays Marine Park (TCMP) which is being managed by the TCMP Board with assistance from the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihood (OPAAL) Project.

Additionally, with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) SVG has developed a Draft Sustainable Finance Plan for Protected Areas System (2007) and conducted an Ecological Gap Analysis of the Protected Areas System, which highlighted the fact that the gap in finances will continue to grow if not addressed.

SVG therefore recognizes the need to develop a sustainable finance mechanism and fully endorses the project to establish National Trusts for Protected Areas which will contribute to addressing some of the issues highlighted above. SVG, in support of the Caribbean Challenge, is also committed to ensuring that 10% of its marine area is effectively managed by 2012 and the expansion of its Marine Protected Area System to include 20% of marine habitats by 2020.

Given its constraints, The Government of SVG will therefore, need further technical and financial assistance to achieve these goals and hopes that our support of this project and our commitment to the Caribbean Challenge will contribute to ultimately protecting and conserving our precious and fragile biodiversity.