



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

PRESS RELEASE

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CREATES THE WORLD'S LARGEST MARINE PROTECTED AREA.

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The decision by United States President George W. Bush to designate the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and surrounding waters and reefs as a national monument will establish the world's largest marine protected area, representing an area the size of California. It will protect about 7,000 species of marine life, one quarter of which occurs nowhere else in the world.

Welcoming the President's initiative, Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said that: "Establishing the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument will make a significant contribution to protecting marine biodiversity and furthering the objectives of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity—the international treaty for the protection of life on Earth. In particular, it will greatly further the objectives of the Convention's programme of work on protected areas, which aims at establishing by 2012 a network of marine protected areas representing 10% of the world's marine and coastal regions. It is also a major contribution to Global Island Partnership, including the Micronesia Challenge Initiative launched by His Excellency Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr, the President of Palau, in Brazil in March this year, at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, the largest ever global conference on biodiversity."

The Micronesia Challenge Initiative seeks to give protected-area status to at least 30% of the marine areas and 20% of the forests of the countries across Micronesia. This represents more than 20% of the Pacific island region and will protect 10% of the global reef area and 58% of all known corals.

Mr. Djoghlaf noted that: "Since the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park in the United States of America over 100 years ago, land-based protected areas have emerged as one of the greatest terrestrial environmental success stories. The Northwest Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument has the potential for a similar success story for the protection of our seas and oceans."

Whereas the oceans comprise 72% of the Earth's surface, only 0.6% of the marine environment lies within protected areas, compared with about 11.5% of the land surface. Marine protected areas are an important instrument for meeting the commitment to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by

2010, made by Heads of State and Government at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Mr. Djoghlaif went on to say that: "President Bush's action raises the bar for future conservation efforts and demonstrates an admirable commitment towards combating the loss of marine biodiversity. The decision of the President of the United States of America to use, for only the second time in his Presidency, the 100-year-old National Antiquities Act is of major political significance and demonstrates the sense of urgency that we need to address the unprecedented rate of extinction of species in order to save life on Earth. It should inspire and guide other leaders of the world in their efforts to fulfil their promise to protect life on Earth for the benefit of present and future generations."

Information for Journalists:

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly-subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992, it currently has 188 Parties—187 States and the European Community—who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The Secretariat is located in Montreal, Canada.

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