

## **INTRODUCTION**

An international Symposium entitled “Ocean Life on the Brink”, sponsored by the Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness (ECCEA), the Pew Environment Group, the Kido Foundation and the Grenada Fund for Conservation (GFC), took place 19-21 May 2010 at the Grenada Grand Beach Resort in Grand Anse, Grenada.

The Symposium was officially opened by H.E. The Hon. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, and the Opening Address was delivered by Former Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Sir Shridath Ramphal. Participants came from across the Caribbean as well as from abroad, and represented a broad spectrum of interests and professions, including scientists, academics, technical experts, youth organizers, educators, representatives of governments and civil society organizations as well as the United Nations Environment Programme, tourism operators, fishers and journalists.

Special messages of support from H.R.H. Princess Pilolevu Tuita of Tonga, that island nation’s patron of whales, and from oceanographer and ocean advocate Dr Sylvia Earle, were presented to the Symposium. The Princess Pilolevu’s message was answered by Mona George-Dill, President of the ECCEA who called for closer linkages, solidarity and the achievement of common goals between the two regions.

Participants heard a number of expert presentations and after deliberations agreed to the following recommendations, as well as to a detailed Plan of Action. In addition, the Symposium also agreed an appeal to Eastern Caribbean Governments for the International Day for Biodiversity, which was issued as a media release. The full text is attached as Annex 1.

## **Recommendations**

RECOGNIZING the importance of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the international community is failing to meet the goal it had set for this year to reduce significantly the loss and decline of biodiversity;

EMPHASIZING the importance of restoring and maintaining the integrity and biodiversity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems given the critical role they play in the functioning of Earth's life-support system and their direct and indirect contribution to human welfare;

RECALLING that the biodiversity of ocean ecosystems continue to provide economic and social benefits to the people of our global neighbourhood, particularly small and vulnerable states in the Caribbean and Pacific;

RECOGNIZING that whales have become icons of conservation, ambassadors for the seas and their threatened biodiversity, and harbingers of much better times for coastal communities worldwide, several of which have been raised from poverty or experienced transitions from scarcity to plenty thanks to the non-lethal and sustainable use of cetaceans through ecotourism;

NOTING that the Caribbean has branded itself as an eco-friendly environment for tourism which accounts for the greater part of the area's GDP, foreign exchange earnings and employment;

NOTING that all 31 species of marine mammals, creatures of prime importance to marine biodiversity that can be found in the Wider Caribbean Region are listed as threatened or endangered in Annex II of the Specially Protected Areas of Wildlife (SPA) Protocol;

WELCOMING the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) approved and adopted by the Thirteenth Intergovernmental Meeting on the UNEP Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Tenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and

Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region in September 2008, and its goals and the framework that it provides to advance marine mammal conservation and observation in the Region;

NOTING that the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA) will be taking place in 2011 in the Eastern Caribbean (Martinique);

AWARE of the fundamental importance of enhanced public education and awareness to the success of biodiversity conservation initiatives in the countries of the region, including through collaboration with schools, civil society outreach programmes and engagement with an informed and aware media;

RECOGNIZING the important and long-standing contributions made by NGOs and the private sector to advancing these goals;

FURTHER AWARE of the urgent need for financial support from international agencies and organizations to education and outreach programmes in the Caribbean Region in matters of biodiversity conservation, as well as related scientific research, data collection and legislation;

DEEPLY ALARMED by the ongoing oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the extensive impacts this will have on the marine environment, biodiversity, and human livelihoods within the Wider Caribbean Region;

REMINDING all Caribbean stakeholders of the 1982 Cartagena Convention's Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combatting Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region and of the related Regional Activity Centre/Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre in Curaçao ;

GREATLY CONCERNED by the diverse proposals for and increased interest in off-shore deep sea drilling in the Caribbean Sea and the limited transparency that surrounds the establishment, exploitation and security of the industry's activities;

**The Ocean Life Symposium II hereby urgently:**

Calls upon Governments of the Wider Caribbean Region to demand provision of a

full report from the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling established by U.S. President Obama and ensure the fullest consultation with all stakeholders before any future deep sea drilling permits be considered, if at all, in the Caribbean Sea and adjacent areas of the Atlantic Ocean, the security of the people and the preservation of the region's biodiversity being mandatory.

**The Symposium further recommends that:**

1. All OECS Governments adopt policies to support and encourage the development of benign uses of whales and other marine species, with due regard to their conservation;
2. All OECS Governments refrain from supporting commercial whaling, especially in agreed sanctuary areas, at the upcoming meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC);
3. All Caribbean Governments adhere to the 1982 Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, including the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW), as the only region-wide legislation specific to the Caribbean region;
4. Caribbean states join together to create new and support proposed and existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Mammal Sanctuaries;
5. Caribbean governments and NGOs engage actively in the Second ICMMPA Conference, to take place in Martinique in November 2011, to highlight the region's sanctuaries and protected areas and seek the creation of "sister sanctuaries" and exchanges between Caribbean and other Small Island

Developing States (SIDS), particularly Pacific Island states with their vast network of MMPAs;

6. Measures be agreed to foster exchanges between groups and institutions in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions whose mandate is marine mammal and ocean life conservation, special attention being paid to sharing of expertise in fields of common interest such as the conservation of island ecosystems, the development of Caribbean regional guidelines for whale-watching, and leadership training for sanctuary and protected area management;
7. The political authorities of Martinique cooperate with the East Caribbean Islands and others in the region on the theme of marine mammal conservation, the sea having no frontiers for its inhabitants, and that this cooperation be coherent with Caribbean marine mammal sanctuaries such as AGOA, and France's National Consultation for Oceans ("Grenelle de la Mer");
8. Common action for the conservation of the humpback whales be taken from their breeding grounds in the Caribbean through to their feeding grounds in higher latitudes, as ambassadors for the protection of marine biodiversity, including through the collection and sharing of information obtained through monitoring programmes, sightings, photo ID work, educational programmes, school exchange initiatives, social networking and other activities.
9. Collaboration among international, regional and national non-governmental organizations working in the Caribbean region be enhanced, with strengthened transparency and communication between all stake-

holders;

10. International organizations, agencies and the European Union be approached to provide significant funding for those Non- Governmental Organisations involved in environmental education for youth and broader public outreach programmes.
11. Arrangements be made for media briefings and training workshops in OECS countries on issues regarding the threats to and progress towards the protection of Ocean Life;
12. Greater involvement from the scientific community be solicited so as to make available valid and easily understood information in support of initiatives throughout the Region to sensitize the public, the media and governments to the need to protect Ocean life in the Wider Caribbean.