

News Release

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Contact

GRENADA: [press contact]
TNC: Chrissy Schwinn
cschwinn@tnc.org
Tel. +1-510-559-3121
+1-415-269-3635

Grenada Pledges to Protect Its Future

Leads Caribbean in Setting Goals to Establish Protected Areas by 2020

CURITIBA, BRAZIL — In an inspiring move for the Caribbean region, the nation of Grenada pledged to put 25 percent of near-shore marine and 25 percent of terrestrial natural resources under effective conservation by 2020. The Declaration, approved by Grenada’s Cabinet, will lead to a nine-fold increase in protection of Grenada’s marine environment and more than double protection of its terrestrial environment.

“Efforts to ensure the health, prosperity and cultural heritage of nations are unlikely to succeed if the ecosystem services on which we rely continue to be degraded,” said Minister Ann David-Antoine from Grenada’s Ministry of the Environment. “For us in Grenada, today indeed marks a historic and momentous juncture in our efforts to protect, conserve, enhance and restore the quality and value of our natural resources in order to sustain social and economic development for present and future generations,” she continued.

Minister Antoine’s pledge was made as leaders from island nations around the world joined together last week at a High Level Side Event of the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to announce significant conservation commitments to protect the future of islands.

The President of Palau, H.E. Tommy Remengesau, Jr. hosted the event, and with the support of leaders across Micronesia announced the Micronesia Challenge: to protect 30 percent of near-shore marine and 20 percent of terrestrial resources on their islands by 2020. The Micronesia Challenge is a shared commitment by the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Territory of Guam.

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While the St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability provides the framework for Grenada's commitment, Minister Antoine categorically stated that the country had been inspired by the Micronesia Challenge.

Grenada now joins the Bahamas, which in 2005, during the 10 Year Review of the Barbados Program of Action meeting, committed to set aside at least 20% of its productive marine bank areas as marine protected areas

The Grenadian coral reef bank marks the southern end of the Caribbean Windward Islands. Lying about 100 miles north of Venezuela, this bank starts on the Reindeer Shoals and extends north, encompassing the Grenadines, a chain of over 20 islands and numerous cays shared both by Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan caused loss of life and significant damage amounting to almost three times Grenada's annual Gross Domestic Product, severely affecting the economic, social and natural fabric of the country. Over 90% of Grenada's wildlife, forested lands, watersheds and mangroves were devastated, and sea grass beds, coral reefs and beaches were significantly damaged.

"We commend Grenada for making this historic commitment and hope they will inspire others in the Caribbean to take this kind of bold action," said **Steve McCormick, President and CEO** of The Nature Conservancy. "We now challenge others – governments, funders, communities and NGOs – to join the momentum and support these islands as they strive to protect the natural resources on which they depend."

Grenada's 2020 vision is an outgrowth of the successful Grenadines Parks in Peril project, a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, USAID and other partners that has advanced implementation of key actions within the CBD's Program of Work on Protected Areas. "The recent work completed on the Protected Areas Gap Analysis provides the basis for this commitment" said Minister Antoine.

"Expanding conservation efforts and achieving them through partnerships with the international conservation community and across all regions are required for our sustainable development," said the Minister. "We fully appreciate the technical support received in this important work so far and we welcome other partnerships that will help us achieve our goals."

Islands are home to more than 500 million people and represent one quarter of the nations of the world, 16 percent of the planet's known plant species and more than half of the world's tropical marine biodiversity. Thirty percent of the world's coral reefs are severely damaged and, without immediate action 60 percent may be lost by 2030. Half of the species in the world that have become extinct have been island species. Without immediate action, islands face continued damage to species, biodiversity and human inhabitants' way of life.

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The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is an international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 47 million hectares in Latin America, North America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at www.nature.org for more information.