

Assessment of the Message from Reunion Island

Background paper for the “International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change”, Guadeloupe, 22-25 October 2014



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List of acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| BIOT | British Indian Ocean Territory |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CEP | Caribbean Environment Programme |
| DCNA | Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance |
| Defra | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK) |
| DEVCO | Directorate General for Development Cooperation (EC) |
| DG REGIO | Directorate General for Regional Policy |
| EIA | Environmental impact assessment |
| EC | European Commission |
| EDF | European Development Fund |
| EU | European Union |
| FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) |
| GLISPA | Global Island Partnership |
| IAS | invasive alien species |
| IDMGB | Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity (UK) |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| JNCC | Joint Nature Conservation Committee (UK) |
| MEP | Members of the European Parliament |
| MPA | marine protected area |
| NGO | non-governmental organisation |
| OCT | Overseas Countries and Territories |
| OCTA | Overseas Countries and Territories Association |
| OR | Outermost Region |
| OT | Overseas Territory |
| OTEP | Overseas Territories Environment Programme |
| RAC | Regional Activity Centre |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| SAERI | South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute |
| SPC | Secretariat of the Pacific Community |
| SPREP | (Secretariat of the) Pacific Regional Environment Programme |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKOTCF | UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature |

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This report is a technical background document. It does not necessarily reflect the policies or views of any of the governments and institutions concerned and of any of the organisations, States, Countries, Territories or Regions cited.

1. Introduction

In July 2008, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), together with the Government of France and the Regional Council of Reunion Island, convened the first conference on biodiversity and climate change in the European Union (EU) overseas entities (the Conference). This meeting gathered, for the first time, representatives of most of the EU overseas entities, their local and national governments, the European Commission (EC), academic and scientific institutions, civil society organisations and private sector entities with the aim to establish a joint strategy and action plan to counter biodiversity loss and the impacts of climate change overseas.

The objectives of the Conference, as stated in its official documents, were to:

- reinforce awareness amongst the European institutions, the EU Member States, the relevant regional and global institutions and the media about the unique natural heritage of the EU's overseas entities, the threats that this heritage faces and the opportunities it can present;
- enhance the effectiveness of action and cooperation between the EU, the Member States and the Outermost Regions (OR) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) in terms of adaptation to climate change, a model energy policy as well as the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity;
- enhance regional cooperation between the ORs, the OCTs as well as their neighbours, and strengthen the voice of the ORs and OCTs on the international environmental scene in concert with the European Union and Small Island Developing States.

Conceived and facilitated by a broad-based Steering Committee, under the French Presidency of the European Union, the Conference included a number of plenary sessions, concurrent thematic workshops, roundtables, media events and a high-level segment. The conclusions and recommendations of this historic meeting were brought together in the Message from Reunion Island (the Message), a comprehensive framework for policy and action¹.

Six years later, significant progress has been made, yet much more remains to be done in order to realise the vision and achieve the objectives articulated in the Message of 2008. It is for the purpose of reviewing this progress, assessing current needs and developing a strategic plan of action, to be known as the "Roadmap from Guadeloupe", that the Regional Council of Guadeloupe, the Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union (OCTA), the European Commission, IUCN, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the French Government and other partners will convene an International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change in Guadeloupe in October 2014.

In preparation for this International Conference, IUCN has commissioned this assessment of the implementation of the Message, which will provide one of the main background documents for the Conference and will inform the preparation of policy briefs. In order to help focus on the themes and cross-cutting issues already identified for consideration by the Guadeloupe Conference, this report provides a brief overview of biodiversity in the OCTs and ORs (section 2), identifies the main

¹ English version of the Message available at: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/080711_reunion_msg_en_1.pdf

French version available at: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/080711_reunion_msg_fr_1.pdf

changes that have occurred in the policy, political, economic and environmental context since 2008 (section 3) and then examines the progress made since the Reunion Conference (section 4) in seven critical domains: evidence; awareness; policy and legislation; capacity, participation and partnerships; conservation action, management regimes and innovation; regional and international cooperation; and finance².

On the basis of this assessment, the report identifies the changes that can be attributed to the Reunion Conference and its Message (section 5), and the main gaps and weaknesses that remain (section 6). Section 7 provides recommendations on issues to be addressed in a Roadmap of priority actions in each of the five themes identified for that Conference, namely:

- *Building resilience*: fostering climate change adaptation, increasing resilience and decreasing vulnerability, and natural resource governance models
- *Tackling biodiversity loss* : combating invasive species, promoting conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity and restoration of ecosystems
- *Developing the blue and green economy*: designing partnerships for the largest marine domain of the world; recognising the important role of biodiversity and valuing ecosystem services
- *Advancing research and capitalising on innovative natural solutions*: defining new challenges and identifying opportunities for developing, using and promoting natural solutions and for supporting innovative actions and development models
- *Mobilising and easing access to resources*: improving governance and developing more effective and efficient financial mechanisms

Additionally, the following cross-cutting issues and themes have been identified for consideration by the Conference: improving policies; strengthening regional and OR/OCT co-operation; strengthening social cohesion; developing capacity-building and awareness; supporting cultural development; and ensuring public health.

The document concludes with specific recommendations on the expected outputs of the Guadeloupe Conference and on the measures and actions it should consider (section 8).

A number of short case studies have been inserted in the document to illustrate progress made, approaches used results obtained and challenges encountered.

2. Biodiversity overseas: importance and challenges

The EU includes 34 overseas entities consisting of 9 Outermost Regions and 25 Overseas Countries and Territories. The ORs are geographic areas situated outside of Europe that are part of a EU Member State, and are fully part of the EU. The OCTs are associated to the EU through their Member State. ORs and OCTs are thus linked to six Member States of the EU: Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Spread across all oceans and home to a vast diversity of species and ecosystems, these European ORs and OCTs are of crucial importance for biodiversity at a global scale. Most are located in biodiversity hotspots³ (Caribbean Islands, Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands, Mediterranean

² The Message contains 167 specific recommendations, and it would not be possible, nor useful, to attempt to document and assess implementation against all recommendations. The seven domains used here however provide an adequate structure for the assessment, as all recommended policies, interventions and actions fall under at least one of these categories, which are also consistent with the cross-cutting themes of the Guadeloupe Conference.

³ See www.biodiversityhotspots.org for definition, background and description of all hotspots.

Basin, New Caledonia, Polynesia-Micronesia), in major wilderness areas (Guyana Shield), or in key regions for polar ecosystems and fish stocks (South Atlantic or Greenland). Together, they host more than 20 per cent of the world's coral reefs and lagoons, the second largest ice body in the world, and vastly more species than mainland EU. Because many ORs and OCTs are island ecosystems, including many biologically isolated islands, they are home to large numbers of endemic species.

A number of useful inventories and assessments of biodiversity have been carried out recently. For example, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has carried out a stocktake of nature in the UK's Overseas Territories, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office⁴, and the French Committee of IUCN has recently published "*Biodiversité d'Outre-mer*", a book presenting the latest scientific knowledge on terrestrial and marine biodiversity in the French overseas territories and the actions taken to protect it. A first edition was published in 2003, so it is possible to measure the efforts made over ten years and to highlight the remaining challenges for biodiversity conservation.

A few examples can help to illustrate this richness and this diversity. New Caledonia alone has about as many endemic species as the entire European continent, French Guiana includes an area of Amazon rainforest the size of Portugal, Greenland is the world's biggest island hosting the second largest ice body in the world and the Chagos archipelago in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is home to the largest coral atoll in the world.

OCTs and ORs have features and face issues similar to those of all islands or low-lying coastal territories. They can be highly affected by the effects of climate change, which poses threats but can also present opportunities. Sea level rise is already affecting some territories and invasive alien species (IAS) constitute a major threat. There are vast, largely unpatrolled marine areas with a number of challenges, including illegal fishing and a clear potential for fishing pressure to increase, modified fish distributions and changes in the productivity of marine and freshwater species. In addition, large-scale infrastructural and industrial projects in these territories can have significant environmental impacts, including investments that have been supported by the European Union. Examples of large-scale infrastructural projects include the new coastal road in Réunion, the construction of an airport in St. Helena, and the expansion of mining and related energy infrastructure in New Caledonia.

While biodiversity in ORs and OCTs is clearly of global importance, and while significant progress has been made towards effective conservation and sustainable use, as described in section 4 below, policies and actions towards its conservation and sustainable use remain somewhat inadequate and insufficient. For a number of reasons, including a prevalent lack of awareness, the values of biodiversity in OCTs and ORs are insufficiently understood, recognised and taken into account in policy and investment decisions at global, European and local levels. Even when there is awareness of their biodiversity value, there is often an assumption among some of the actors that, because of their link to Europe, OCTs and ORs all have sufficient resources and capacities. In many instances, there are constitutional, legal and institutional issues that prevent effective conservation and management. OCTs and ORs also generally suffer from capacity constraints, although situations vary enormously depending on population size and availability of resources. Larger territories have similar constraints to small independent countries, while the least populated ones have little or no possibility of increasing endogenous capacity.

⁴ <http://www.rspb.org.uk/OTwildlife>

3. The context: main changes and trends since the Reunion Conference

Between 2008 and 2014, there have been significant changes in the global policy, political, economic and environmental context, changes that have important implications for sustainable development, environmental management and conservation everywhere. The “Roadmap from Guadeloupe” should be cognisant of these changes and the Guadeloupe Conference should take them into account in the identification of priorities and the assessment of feasibility.

3.1. The global financial crisis increased vulnerability and threats to biodiversity overseas

Today’s world is radically different from what it was in July 2008, two months before the financial company Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy protection. The rich biodiversity of ORs and OCTs has not been immune to the changes experienced by the global economy: the global financial crisis has had major implications for national budgets and has provoked significant austerity measures; it has created challenging conditions for scientific and civil society organisations; and it has encouraged responses that may favour short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability. In some instances, however, the urgency of economic issues and the need to diversify and sustain livelihoods have, or could have, helped to support policies and actions favourable to biodiversity, as a provider of goods and services critical to development.

3.2. Some changes in legal status have had and will have implications for biodiversity protection

In some of the EU Member States and in some of the OCTs and ORs, constitutional and statutory changes have occurred, with implications for biodiversity, environmental management and sustainable development. The following can be noted:

- Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius in 2010 became special municipalities of the Netherlands, while Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten now have separate status as autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This has resulted in increased attention to and funding for biodiversity issues in the three municipalities and consequently, to a lesser extent, in all Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. But the changes have also introduced complications and difficulties in collaborative initiatives among the islands, as they now have distinct statuses and associations with the Kingdom and the EU;
- in 2007, shortly before the Conference, Saint Barthélemy and Saint Martin became *Collectivités Territoriales*⁵, with Saint Martin having retained the status of an OR while Saint Barthélemy is now an OCT. This has given Saint Barthélemy responsibility for environmental matters. In Saint Martin, on the other hand, the situation is less clear, as mandates and authorities should be those of all French ORs, but local institutions may not yet have the required capacities, and the island no longer has access to the technical support that it previously received from the decentralised French agencies in Guadeloupe;

⁵ Both islands were previously part of the *Département* of Guadeloupe. This change gave them the status of special municipalities under French law, with the option of becoming associated to the EU either as an OCT or as an OR.

- in New Caledonia, there has been a progressive transfer of responsibilities from France to the local Government, including in several areas directly relevant to climate change and ecosystem services such as mining, rural development and land management, and marine protected areas;
- the island of Mayotte in the Comoros archipelago became a French *Département* in 2011 and formally became an OR of the European Union on 1 January 2014. Concurrent with this change process, Mayotte has been involved in the formulation of a biodiversity strategy for sustainable development that was launched in 2012;
- on 21 June 2009, the Greenland's Self-Government Act came into force, and on 7 October 2009 Denmark submitted a notification on the Act on Greenland Self-Government to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Accordingly, and among other things, the Greenland Government authorities have assumed the rights for the Greenland subsoil. The Greenland's Self-Government Act provides that the Danish government retains responsibility for foreign policy, defence and security policy, the legal and judicial system, and monetary policy.

3.3. The policy context of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development at the level of the EU Member States

The policy context of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development is also significantly different at the level of the EU Member States, with the following changes being among the most significant that have taken place since 2008:

- with respect to policy guidance, in 2009, the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) released a new UK Government strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Overseas Territories, and the OT Governments and the UK Government have jointly committed to a series of actions that are set out in Joint Ministerial Council Communiqués;
- in France, the most significant policy-related developments have been: (a) the broad-based multi-sectoral consultation and policy-formulation process known as the *Grenelle de l'Environnement*, officially launched in 2007, which included a focus on matters affecting overseas entities, and produced a number of commitments and reforms; (b) building on this process, a consultation known as *Grenelle de la Mer*, conducted in 2009, which focused on marine issues and led, among many other recommendations and instruments, to the formulation of a strategy for marine protected areas, with a component specifically dedicated to overseas entities; (c) the review of the National Biodiversity Strategy in 2010, which was first formulated and adopted in 2005, with a number of action plans including one for OCTs and ORs, and with this review benefiting from the lessons coming from implementing the first strategy; and (d) the launch, in 2012, of annual environmental conferences, structured around four broad domains and aimed at promoting dialogue and formulating recommendations;
- in the Netherlands, a Biodiversity Strategy has been developed for the Dutch Caribbean which, together with the Nature Policy Plan for the Caribbean Netherlands and other planning and strategy documents, provides the policy and action framework for the conservation and management of biodiversity in the six islands;

- the Kingdom of Denmark's Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020 was adopted by the Government of Denmark, the Government of the Faroe Islands and the Government of Greenland, and it was launched by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 2011.

3.4. Relevant policy changes at the European level since 2008

At the European level, there have also been a number of changes that have created a policy environment that is significantly different from what it was in 2008

The most significant among these changes include:

(a) the adoption, in 2012, by the European Parliament, of the *European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020* (European Commission 2011), which constitutes the overarching policy framework for biodiversity in Europe, and creates the opportunity to work with the outermost regions and overseas countries and territories through the BEST (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas) initiative to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. The Strategy will be subject to a mid-term review in 2015;

(b) the formulation of a new strategy of engagement with Outermost Regions, "towards a partnership for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (European Commission 2012);

(c) the adoption, by the Council of Europe, of Council Decision 2013/755/EU of 25 November 2013 on the association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Union, known as the "Overseas Association Decision", which identifies the sustainable management of natural resources, including the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as one of the priority areas of cooperation between the EU and OCTs, stresses the significant role OCTs could play in contributing to the Union's commitments under multi-lateral environmental agreements, and includes a number of important provisions related to the environment and biodiversity. This new Decision came after a process of consultation that was launched in 2008 with the release of a Green Paper on "Future relations between the EU and the Overseas Countries and Territories" (Commission of the European Communities 2008);

(d) the adoption by the European Council (4 March 2014) of Decision 2014/137/EU that modifies the relations between the EU on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other;

and (e) the synchronisation of programming calendars between the European Development Fund (EDF) and Structural Funds, which began in 2007, and which makes it easier to promote joint approaches and activities between ORs and OCTs.

Other major policy developments that have occurred at European level since 2008 and that are directly relevant to biodiversity include the adoption by the Council of the European Union, in June 2013, of an EU strategy on adaptation to climate change; the new OR Cohesion Policy; the 2013 Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species; the 7th Programme of Action for the Environment, which makes reference to ORs and OCTs; and the May 2014 conclusions of the Council of the EU on developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region. The Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories, known as the Preparatory Action BEST, and the new dispositions of the LIFE+ Programme, which

are presented in section 4 below, are other expressions of the policy changes that have occurred in recent years.

3.5. Some ORs and OCTs increased their formal engagement in regional institutions and groupings

This is particularly significant in the Caribbean, with Guadeloupe and Martinique having formally joined the Association of Caribbean States as Associate Members in 2014, and with a similar process currently underway with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, with increased opportunities for collaboration and regional integration coming as a result.

In the Pacific, French Polynesia and New Caledonia have acquired observer status in the Pacific Islands Forum and advocate their inclusion as full members. New Caledonia plays a particularly important role in regional organisations, it is currently the fourth largest financial contributor to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), which is headquartered in Noumea, and it assumed the presidency of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in 2012.

3.6. Changes that are affecting the natural environment

There are indications that climate change may already be affecting species and habitats in ORs and OCTs, through sea level rise, changes in weather patterns or changes in fish stocks, with implications on management regimes and protected area planning.

Climate models for many OCTs and ORs still reflect high levels of uncertainty due to lack of data and scale of resolution; meaning that responses must be flexible and aim to increase resilience to all potential climate impacts, while also capitalising on the positive changes that may occur in some regions. Sites with important and fragile biodiversity will be affected as more remote OCTs become less isolated. Increasing human demand for water resources is likely to impact significantly on biodiversity over the coming years, and in some cases will be exacerbated by climate change. Invasive species represent a growing threat and source of impact, with the spread the lionfish in the Caribbean providing a current illustration of the dangers of accidental introductions.

4. Progress on the Reunion Message's agenda

This section summarises the progress made in biodiversity conservation and management and in related spheres since the Reunion Conference, grouped into seven broad domains: evidence; awareness; policy and legislation; capacity, participation and partnerships; conservation action, management regimes and innovation; regional and international cooperation; and finance. There is of course overlap between these categories, and some of the advances and issues discussed below apply to more than one.

4.1. Outcomes on EVIDENCE

Progress in this area has been uneven, with significant achievements in some Member States and some groupings of ORs and/or OCTs, and less in others. It is therefore difficult to paint a picture applicable to all Territories, Countries and Regions, but the following features and examples of improvements and actions undertaken since 2008 can be noted:

- in many entities and geographic areas, there is now ***a better baseline and a better knowledge of biodiversity***. This increased knowledge is

due in part to the conduct of systematic data collection exercises, for example: the updating of Red Lists; inventories such as the recent updating inventory of the *Zones Naturelles d'Intérêt Ecologique, Faunistique et Floristique* in French Guiana, the inventory of flora and habitats in the *Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises* or inventories of flora and fauna and updating of a coastal atlas in the British Virgin Islands; taxonomic work in areas with significant knowledge gaps such as Ascension Island and St. Helena (where a major inventory and baseline research project is currently underway with support from the UK Government's Darwin Initiative); marine eco-regional analyses carried out in New Caledonia and French Polynesia; and an on-going research and monitoring programme on mangroves in New Caledonia, in the context of climate change. This progress must however be placed in context of huge gaps and needs, and much remains to be done to provide the scientific information and the evidence needed for biodiversity conservation and management;

- in several regions, **the institutional capacity for undertaking research has increased**. In the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, for example, increased funding and attention, primarily as a result of the change of status of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius, have resulted in the recent creation of the Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute based in Sint Eustatius. The Institute aims to become an authoritative expert and facility centre acknowledged in the Caribbean Netherlands and the wider Caribbean region, positioned at the intersection of science, research, education, management and governance. In the South Atlantic, the creation of the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) with its South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre is a significant development in that geographic region. In Greenland, the Greenland Climate Research Centre was established in 2009 in collaboration between the Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources and the University of Greenland. The centre is concerned with the expected impacts of climate change on Arctic marine, limnic and terrestrial environments and on Greenlandic society, including adaptation and prevention strategies;
- some of the progress made in research and data collection has been supported by **comprehensive strategic frameworks**, such as the *Stratégie territoriale pour les Outre-mer* which has been formulated by the French Ministry responsible for Research and which represents a first attempt to coordinate all research initiatives and policies relevant to French OCTs and ORs. On a larger scale, the second EC-funded NetBiome project aims at extending and strengthening research partnerships and cooperation for smart and sustainable management of tropical and subtropical biodiversity in ORs and OCTs. Also at the European level, the EC's Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DEVCO) has commissioned environmental profiles for all OCTs, which are designed to bring together available information. Similarly, the EC's Directorate General for Environment has commissioned, through the third phase of the BEST Preparatory Action, ecosystem profiles for all ORs and OCTs, which will help to bring together available information and to identify priority actions and investments;
- while the knowledge on biodiversity has increased, understanding of the linkages between biodiversity and **ecosystem services**, of the

contribution of these services to socio-economic development and livelihoods, and of the requirements for the maintenance and enhancement of these services remains limited.

While this progress is significant and welcome, there are also **important concerns** expressed by actors in OCTs and ORs, especially regarding: (a) reductions in funding as a result of budget cuts; (b) a drive towards economically-driven research, at the expense of sectors such as biodiversity; and (c) the fact that too much research may be driven by the interests of researchers in national and international institutions rather than by locally determined needs. This has in some instances led to tensions between local actors and foreign researchers, which can undermine the potential for development of mutually beneficial partnerships. OR and OCT could significantly increase their participation in EU research programmes by getting involved in consortia as partners and also by better using the “bottom-up “ schemes such as the Marie Curie Fellowships.

4.2. Outcomes on AWARENESS

There has undoubtedly been a significant increase in the awareness of the richness, value and significance on biodiversity in ORs and OCTs, but this increase has been more substantial at some levels than in others. Some of that increased awareness is a result of the Reunion Conference, along with many initiatives since. In addition to the work done by public agencies and civil society in ORs and OCTs, campaigns and activities aimed at raising awareness of policy-makers have included the dissemination of information to elected mayors in France; the campaign *Outre-mer, notre nature* funded by French Ministry of the Environment; lobbying documents produced for Members of the European Parliament (MEP); and information activities organised at the European Parliament through the Intergroup on “Climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development” and in particular its sub-group on “Islands and Europe overseas”, and by the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA). As a direct follow-up to the Reunion Conference, as part of its programme of work dedicated to Europe overseas, IUCN has sustained awareness-raising and communication efforts through activities that have included the convening of the Europe Overseas Roundtable on Biodiversity and Climate Change, as a platform for policy dialogue and information exchange among all actors, the construction and maintenance of a dedicated website, the formulation of a broad-based communication strategy, and the organisation of a number of events.

Among the most noticeable expressions of that increased awareness, one can note:

- a greater focus on environment in the new Overseas Association Decision of November 2013;
- within the EC, a greater involvement of relevant Directorates General, especially DEVCO, in matters of biodiversity overseas;
- in the ORs and OCTs, a greater awareness of the resources and tools potentially available under international conventions and through international or regional initiatives, resulting in increased demand to be part of these instruments;
- at all levels, a better awareness of the impacts of climate change and related need for stronger development control; invasive species and sustainable energy are also higher on the agenda.

4.3. Outcomes on POLICY, LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONS

As noted earlier, the policy environment has in several respects become more favourable to biodiversity conservation and management, thanks to new instruments

at European level and within Member States, and institutional arrangements give a stronger voice to ORs and OCTs, notably with the strengthening of OCTA. In ORs and OCTs, there has been much parallel progress. Some ORs and OCTs have enacted **new legislation** and in some cases these instruments are quite significant. For example, the Cayman Islands have recently enacted an Environmental Bill that will operationalize the tourism tax-supported Environment Fund (while the previously existing tourism-tax-supported Conservation Fund in the Turks & Caicos Islands was abolished). In Saint Barthélemy and in two Provinces in New Caledonia (North and South), new pieces of legislation known as *Codes de l'Environnement* have been developed, while Wallis is in the process of developing a sustainable development strategy, Mayotte has adopted its Biodiversity strategy, French Polynesia has adopted and New Caledonia is currently formulating a climate change adaptation strategy, and Guadeloupe is working on an environmental plan. Some of these instruments and similar policy reform processes include innovative clauses, such as the provisions for benefit-sharing included in the regulations adopted by the South Province in New Caledonia, and the harmonisation between mining and environment legislation in French Guiana.

There have also been efforts aimed at **environmental mainstreaming**⁶. In Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands (BVI) and the Falklands, the UK's FCO, Defra and JNCC have supported such processes, which are designed to assist UK OTs to identify the key issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the environment is properly taken into account in all aspects of economic and infrastructure planning. The initiative is currently being extended to Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos. In 2007 and 2009, progress in conservation and in the implementation of the Environment Charters in the UK territories was reviewed systematically by the UKOTCF, collating information from the territories⁷.

There has also been some **progress in applying the framework of the CBD to OCTs**. Ascension Island, which through its association with St. Helena is one of the four UK OTs to which the Convention is already extended, is currently preparing a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

There are a small number of positive developments for biodiversity in overseas Europe as a result of **EU legislation**. Important legislation has recently been enacted on climate change adaptation, which applies to the ORs, but not to the OCTs, and the EC has published a proposal for a Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, which recognises the importance of the issue, but does not provide specific instruments tailored to overseas entities. While these constitute important advances, it is clear that more could be done to increase and enhance the applicability of EU legislation to ORs and/or OCTs, where appropriate, and to maintain coherence and continuity between the various levels. EU legislation must also be seen as an instrument to assist in managing relations with neighbours, as illustrated by the case of illegal fishing in French Guiana's waters that was effectively resolved by a threat of EU sanctions against Brazil.

In order to provide a more coherent approach to maritime issues and to facilitate increased coordination between different policy areas at European level, an Integrated Maritime Policy was adopted in 2012. It recognises the strategic importance of ORs and OCTs, but does not translate this into specific actions in its work programmes, and while it identifies regional seas around the European

⁶ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6436>

⁷ www.ukotcf.org

mainland as necessary to support cooperation, it does not do so for regions in which ORs and OCTs are located, it does not make explicit reference to existing regional cooperation mechanisms in fisheries and marine area management, and it does not provide specific instruments for implementation in those regions. Considering the size and importance of the *marine territory* of the EU as a result of its overseas presence, many stakeholders feel that a debate is needed to examine the feasibility and desirability of developing a framework to better support sustainable management of the marine resources and conservation of critical and very diverse marine ecosystems.

4.4. Outcomes in CAPACITY, PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Limited capacity remains a major challenge, even in the larger territories, but there have been significant advances.

New and existing collaborative arrangements and networks have facilitated the pooling of resources. Through its technical assistance project funded by the EC, OCTA facilitates dialogue and cooperation among OCTs on an on-going basis. At sub-regional level, organisations such as SAERI and the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) offer frameworks for cooperation among the OCTs in their respective regions and also between them and external research and conservation institutions. Professional networks have been activated or strengthened, such as the network on exotic invasive species established under the auspices of UICN France. Also in France, the programme *Terres et Mers Ultramarines* (Te Me Um) provides a framework for networking, exchange, information and expertise sharing, and training. In the UK, the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group chaired by Defra usefully brings together the diverse governmental bodies with responsibilities for Overseas Territory environment issues through regular meetings that contribute to information sharing and policy coordination, while JNCC, which serves as the secretariat of the Biodiversity Group, supports a number of collaborative and networking activities in and among UK Overseas Territories. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), which has been active for almost three decades, supports the establishment of conservation organisations and facilitates networking between these and with supporting bodies and personnel elsewhere, for example by operating regional working groups for partners in the Wider Caribbean, Southern Oceans, and the edges of Europe. In 2009, UKOTCF held a conference in the Cayman Islands, and led the submission of an application that resulted in EU funding for a project on protected areas in the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks & Caicos Islands.

A number of ***training initiatives*** may have contributed to increased capacity. EU Member States have supported several training activities, especially through Aten in the case of France, and through DCNA in the case of the Netherlands, aimed at increasing professionalization and institutionalisation of protected area management. In the UK, virtually all projects funded through the Darwin Plus mechanism include a capacity building element. The technical assistance to OCTA project, which is funded by the EC, provides training opportunities to OCTs, with a traineeship and internship programme and with workshops on technical topics such as environmental impact assessments (EIA) and climate change. The impacts of training are however constrained by rapid staff turnover in small institutions, as well as the limited number of local young people entering the field. For example, efforts have been made to give students from OCTs better access to tertiary education in Member States, as all OCT citizens are EU nationals and have full EU citizen rights and OCT students therefore enjoy equal benefits as EU Nationals students. However, opportunities have not been taken up sufficiently, possibly because of low value given to environmental careers. In the Pacific, SPREP is hosting and facilitating the Pacific Emerging

Environment Leaders Forum, which aims at nurturing and supporting young people interested in participating in environmental matters at the highest levels.

Capacity to access funding remains a major challenge for ORs and OCTs, but capacity in grant writing and project management has increased somewhat in a number of organisations, thanks to their having had the opportunity to submit or participate in proposals to the BEST Preparatory Action or (for the ORs) the LIFE Programme. As a result, and while conditions of access to funding remain beyond the reach of many organisations, there is now a larger community of local actors with capacity to play a lead role in project design and execution in ORs and OCTs.

The Message called for greater **participation and stronger partnerships**, and there has been some progress in that regard. One of the pivotal recommendations of the Message was to provide the framework for partnerships and networking among a diversity of stakeholders. While that scheme has not yet fully materialised, there has been some progress at the various levels. For example, there has been more civil society participation in the development of strategies, as in the case of the *Schémas d'Aménagement Régional* in the French ORs. New institutions such as the *Conservatoire des Espaces Naturels* in New Caledonia provide innovative instruments of coordination among all actors. There have also been new partnerships, including with the private sector, as in the case of formal agreements between large mining companies and governments of the Provinces in New Caledonia; there have been multi-level partnerships in the management of marine protected areas (MPA) in many OCTs and ORs; and there are important thematic or sub-regional partnerships such as the DCNA and the *Initiative Française pour les Récifs Coralliens*.

4.5. Outcomes in REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Integration into regional and international institutions and programmes is an effective way for ORs and OCTs to overcome their limited local capacity, access to financial and technical resources and political clout, as regional cooperation and integration are explicit policy goals of the EU (Sutton 2012). Since 2008, good but uneven progress has been made in that regard. In the realm of biodiversity, the main instruments of participation are the intergovernmental regional environmental programmes and institutions, notably the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) and SPREP, which are both part of the Regional Seas Programme supported by the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as the Indian Ocean Commission. In the Pacific, SPREP is facilitating the formulation of a Pacific SIDS framework for conservation and protected areas.

There has perhaps been more progress in the Caribbean than in the other regions, and this may be due to the existence and the growing and effective role of the CEP's Regional Activity Centre (RAC) on the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife of the Cartagena Convention, which is hosted by Guadeloupe. In the Pacific, New Caledonia is becoming much more integrated in regional institutions, notably SPREP and the SPC, thanks in part to its hosting the SPC Secretariat, having assumed the presidency of SPREP, and having contributed funding to regional projects, with personnel of technical agencies in New Caledonia playing a key role in facilitating this participation.

There are a number of promising examples of site or issue specific collaboration such as that between Dutch OCTs and French ORs on developing a marine mammal sanctuary in the Caribbean with good support from the CEP's RAC in Guadeloupe. Civil society organisations and networks also play important roles in facilitating international and regional cooperation include the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Conservation International,

BirdLife and its associates, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, DCNA, UICN France, UKOTCF, and many others.

The EC has provided resources that have contributed to increased collaboration, notably through its support for the Net-Biome research consortium, for biodiversity projects under the MAC cooperation programme in Macaronesia, which involves the Portuguese and Spanish ORs, and with the INTEGRE project funded under the 10th EDF with a focus on integrated coastal management in 4 Pacific OCTs. However, even in cases of collaboration between the OCTs and ORs of different Member States, it does not appear that the EU, or European policy, is a driving factor, in spite of stated policy objectives. Indeed, the frameworks for cooperation between the EU, the geographic regions (e.g. CARIFORUM), the ORs and the OCTs are often disconnected, and this is reflected in the weak or absent linkages between similar initiatives, as in the case of protected areas, where the EC-funded Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme works to address threats to biodiversity in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries with no linkage with or involvement of ORs and OCTs in the regions where it is active.

4.6. Outcomes on the ground through CONSERVATION ACTION, MANAGEMENT REGIMES AND INNOVATION

Protected areas have been at the centre of much of the action on the ground in OCTs and ORs in the past few years, with progress not only on the legal establishment of new protected areas but also on management plans and management effectiveness. International recognition and protection of the biodiversity wealth of OCTs and ORs also increased, for example with the declaration of natural World Heritage Sites in Reunion and in New Caledonia and a Ramsar Site at Plaine des Lacs in New Caledonia. This recognition of the global importance of Europe's overseas biodiversity is also reflected in the growing involvement of international conservation partners such as the Pew Charitable Trusts through its Global Ocean Legacy Campaign and its support to initiatives in several areas such as the BIOT and French Polynesia. At local level, there is some evidence of more strategic approaches. In Reunion, for example, strategies are in place for invasive species, with collaboration between a number of institutions, and for the conservation of flora and natural habitats. In the British Virgin Islands, with three decades of experience in protected area planning and management, a new system has been developed that provides a fully integrated legal and management framework. The first two years of the BEST Preparatory Action have contributed to important conservation action and innovation in several ORs and OCTs.

Climate change is becoming an increasing area of action and attention, for example with the establishment of climate change observatories in several territories and regions, including French Polynesia, which has elaborated a climate change adaptation strategy. Another example is the *Grand observatoire de l'environnement et de la biodiversité terrestre et marine du Pacifique Sud*, which brings together 17 scientific and research institutions in France and in the French OCTs in the Pacific. Benefit-sharing is another new area of attention, with commitments and measures included in local legislation and management instruments in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and French Guiana. Some of this work has actually led to the conduct of an important study by the French Government with the technical support of *Fondation pour la Recherche sur la Biodiversité* (CGDD 2011) and the inclusion of new provisions in a proposed new legislation in France.

Another domain of innovation worth mentioning is the inclusion of the concept of ecosystems of heritage value in local regulations in New Caledonia.

4.7. Outcomes in FINANCING

There have been significant advances in the provision and diversification of financing, which was at the core of recommendations emerging from the Reunion Conference.

Thanks to the European Parliament, the European Commission launched in 2011 the **BEST Preparatory Action**, with two open calls for proposals (2011 and 2012) and one call for tender in 2013. During the first two years, 16 projects were funded for a total amount in excess of EUR 10 million (EUR 4 million provided by the European Parliament/Preparatory Action BEST, and the balance covered by co-financing), with two additional projects funded directly by the *Agence Française de Développement*.

In 2013, the BEST Preparatory Action issued a call for tender for a single project entitled: “Measures towards sustaining the BEST preparatory action to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in EU outermost regions and overseas countries and territories”, which is implemented by IUCN and a number of partners. This project was in follow-up to work within the European Commission and as part of a BEST 2011 facilitation project implemented by IUCN, on the assessment of funding needs and financing options, and on the design of a permanent financing mechanism, with the formulation of a business case in support for the establishment of such a mechanism.

The **Programme for the Environment and Climate Action** (commonly known as the LIFE Programme), (commonly known as the LIFE Programme), which is the EU’s financing instrument for the environment, was extended to ORs in 2008 for biodiversity activities. However, only two LIFE projects were financed between 2007 and 2013 (with two more recently approved for projects in Reunion Island), and this is likely due to the complexity of the application process and to some of the financing requirements and conditions. The issue of accessibility of the LIFE Programme to OCTs has been raised in several forums, and has now been addressed with an EC Regulation of December 2013, which states that the “Programme may finance activities outside the Union and in overseas countries and territories (OCTs) in accordance with Decision 2001/822/EC (the Overseas Association Decision), provided those activities are necessary to achieve Union environmental and climate objectives and to ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried out in Member State territories to which the Treaties apply”. The application of this recent Decision has not yet been tested, and there are concerns over the feasibility for OCTs to access such funds.

The **Thematic Programme on Global Public Goods and Challenges** has been introduced under the new Instrument for Development Cooperation. Its goals include “the enhancement of the environmental sustainability dimension of development processes at all levels and the provision of support to the transformation towards a green economy in order to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth for human development within the limits of the planetary boundaries”, as well as “addressing the concurrent challenges presented by the legitimate demand of developing countries to access energy in order to promote their economic growth and improve the livelihoods of their people, the increasingly urgent need to cut greenhouse-gas emissions to a level which will not cause irreparable damage to the planet’s climate, and energy security”.

European Structural Funds for ORs and EDF for OCTs remain the main sources of European funding, with different levels of funding and separate channels. There is however a strong feeling among actors in the field of biodiversity that, despite the mention of the importance of biodiversity in OCTs and ORs, the specific provisions of the programming and financing frameworks developed by ORs and the OCTs do not give biodiversity sufficient attention. This may be attributed to the fact that most ORs

and OCTs give priority to infrastructural projects at the expense of investments in biodiversity and environmental sustainability. Local actors also see the programming processes as insufficiently transparent and participatory.

While EU Member States have all experienced economic and fiscal challenges over the past few years, and continue to experience such challenges at this time, **financing for biodiversity at national level** has remained somewhat stable. In the UK, despite spending cuts in most departments, there has been no reduction in biodiversity funding for UK OTs, which has largely been channelled through the Darwin Initiative (funded by Defra) and the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) funded by FCO and DFID. In 2012, the UK government launched a dedicated scheme for Overseas Territories, called Darwin Plus, which has amalgamated UK Government funding for environmental projects in the OTs (up to £2 million per year). The Netherlands has increased funding for biodiversity in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, primarily as a result of the change of status of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius. In France, there was a threefold increase in funding in 2010 as a result of the review of the National Biodiversity Strategy, a further increase in 2011, and decreasing funding levels since then. The Kingdom of Denmark's Strategy for the Arctic was launched in 2011, and the Government of Greenland and the European Environment Agency signed an agreement aimed at improving bilateral cooperation in environmental monitoring and sharing environmental data and information.

European and Member State support has been complemented by some **funding from foundations and private charities**, most notably the Pew Charitable Trusts, which has funded and continues to support a number of projects through its Global Ocean Legacy Campaign.

5. Where the Reunion Conference and Message made a difference

The stakeholders consulted for this assessment overwhelmingly agree that the main positive outcome of the Reunion Conference was **increased awareness among key actors, awareness of both the vast biodiversity wealth of ORs and OCTs and the threats to that resource**, but that this increase may have manifested itself more at European and Member State levels than in the OCTs and ORs themselves.

Awareness-raising activities conducted since 2008 have reinforced that outcome. There is also a perception that the Conference contributed, especially within European institutions, to a more general awareness of the existence and importance of OCTs and ORs. As expressed by one of the respondents in the interviews carried out to inform this assessment, it "helped to create a policy and political concept that was almost non-existent before". The fact that MEPs and especially the Member from New Caledonia, played an active role in the promotion of biodiversity in the context of sustainable development in OCTs and ORs contributed substantially to this awareness.

That increased interest by policy-makers appears to have contributed to some increased financial support for biodiversity research and conservation from the EU and the national governments. The most significant among those is the **BEST Preparatory Action**, which was undoubtedly a direct response to the Message. While there is no evidence to link the Reunion Conference and its Message to other financing decisions such as Darwin Plus in the UK, it can be assumed that the focus and attention generated then contributed to stronger commitments.

The Conference, and the planning for it, also led to some **new relationships and networks** across political and linguistic divides, as actors met and shared common

concerns. These relationships may have borne fruit in, or at least facilitated, some of the collaborative initiatives discussed in the previous sections, such as the collaboration between French and Dutch territories in marine mammal conservation in the Caribbean.

Another indirect but important benefit of the Reunion Conference and Message is that they **validated the concerns and actions of civil society organisations**, and consequently gave some of them a stronger position on the institutional landscape and a greater legitimacy in the eyes of European and other actors. Before 2008, much of the work on biodiversity in OCTs and ORs was done by these civil society organisations (local, national, regional and international, including civil society networks) and by field actors (e.g. protected areas authorities), with little recognition of the importance of that work outside an immediate circle of partners and like-minded institutions. The Reunion process helped to change these perceptions and thus legitimised these actors and their work.

The increased awareness created by the Conference has also clearly resulted in a **more positive environment for biodiversity action and investment overseas**, but it is more difficult to assess the actual impact of the Message. While the wide range of issues it covered and recommendations it made were all highly relevant, the Message lacked a plan of action with ranked priorities and a strong mechanism for steering and monitoring implementation. Following the Conference, with support from the EC, France and other partners, IUCN provided much of the leadership and facilitation and convened a Roundtable on Biodiversity and Climate Change which provided a useful forum for the exchange of information and opinions, but no one was effectively tasked with the responsibility and capacity to coordinate an implementation process. This may have to do with this arrangement, which presented a number of benefits (flexibility, convening power of IUCN, insertion in a global agenda), but will never replace the necessary active mobilisation and implication and involvement of government agencies and civil society organisations in the Member States and in the OCTs and ORs themselves.

One recommendation that came out strongly from the Message and that many stakeholders supported was that of the **voluntary species and habitat protection scheme**. There is feeling among many actors that not enough effort was made to promote and concretise that idea.

6. Where gaps and weaknesses remain

6.1. Financing remains the primary concern of most actors involved in biodiversity in OCTs and ORs

There is a consensus that funding available for biodiversity conservation and management in ORs and OCTs is **insufficient and not proportionate** to the importance of that biodiversity nor to Europe's responsibility in managing it. There are many factors and issues responsible for the inadequacy of financing, and these have been extensively documented⁸:

- civil society organisations face special challenges, especially because very little small-scale funding is available, the procedures for existing funding windows such as LIFE are often too complex for local organisations, and funding is available mainly for discrete interventions,

⁸ Biotope reports on financing for the BEST Facilitation Project, 2014.

not for organisational development and sustainable, long-term programmes;

- the conditions for eligibility for European funding are different between OCTs and ORs, with weak or non-existent opportunities to create synergies and ensure the complementarity of interventions, in particular regarding the LIFE programme;
- OCTs and ORs have difficulty meeting the co-financing requirements of European and other funding mechanisms, because of their ineligibility to financing from sources that are accessible to their independent neighbours;
- some OCT governments face additional challenges, as devolution of responsibility for biodiversity management to territorial governments has generally come without the corresponding financial support to carry out those responsibilities. Longer-term programmatic funding is needed, but available grant facilities are short-term and project-based;
- there are also challenges for ORs and OCTs wanting to undertake or participate in regional initiatives including ones that also involve neighbouring independent countries. For example, Global Environment Facility funding is available for biodiversity initiatives involving multiple developing countries but cannot be used for OTs within the geographic boundaries of the initiative and this creates odd situations, such as the non-participation of ORs or OCTs in specific efforts to combat IAS;
- despite the support to NetBiome, there is still insufficient funding available for research on complex problems that require long-term, multi-institutional initiatives;
- funding provided by Member States, while significant, remains somewhat disproportionate to the needs and the opportunities;
- the framework documents and financing proposals developed by ORs and OCTs as part of their partnership with Europe often do not reflect the importance of their biodiversity and ecosystems and do not take full advantage of the growing interest and commitment at the European level.

6.2. Overseas Regions, Territories and Countries are increasingly vulnerable to external impacts and economic exploitation

Balancing conservation and economic development remains a difficult challenge in all the overseas entities. This challenge is perhaps most acute in the coastal zone of the small islands, where there is a concentration of activities and resource uses and increasing pressure on biodiversity.

One feature of ORs and OCTs is that they often attract large infrastructural projects, and the dominant response to the global financial and economic crisis has been and remains the promotion of investments with potential negative impacts on biodiversity. There are several examples of such projects and developments: hydroelectric projects with high impact, oil exploration in French Guiana, a new coal power station in New Caledonia (that could make this OCT the third largest emitter of CO₂ per capita in the world), deep sea mining in the Portuguese exclusive economic zone located around the ORs of Azores and Madeira, intensification of farming practices, and the new coastal road project in Reunion. If unsustainable practices are used to exploit natural resource, this may not be fully consistent with the intent and content of the Reunion Message and the various international commitments of Europe and, as a result, the community of ORs and OCTs may be losing its ability and legitimacy to

be an advocate on climate change mitigation and a global leader in climate change adaptation.

While progress has been made in some territories with respect to impact assessment, these issues are exacerbated by the fact that the EU Directive on EIA is not fully respected in a number of cases of large infrastructural projects in the ORs and that it is not applicable to the OCTs. The result has been that these projects have made little or no provision for impact assessment, reduction and mitigation.

Knowledge generation and dissemination remain insufficient

Despite all the progress made, some of which has been very significant, there are a number of continuing constraints to the production and availability of scientific evidence. The needs include:

- pursuing and expanding the compilation of baselines, the collection of taxonomic data, the updating of Red Lists, the conduct of resource assessments, and the identification of critical ecosystem services;
- developing specific biodiversity indicators for overseas biodiversity at the European level for better monitoring the status and trends (in complement to regional indicators), as well as the impacts of the European policies and funds;;
- recognising and supporting the role of local universities and other knowledge institutions, especially as there is a need for specialised people on the ground, not only because of the work they do in their research, but because they provide resident resources for conservation policy and action;
- bridging the gap, whenever it exists, between local needs and external research, by allocating responsibilities for implementation, building and encouraging research partnerships, and strengthening the capacity of scientific and academic institutions in ORs and OCTs;
- making appropriate use of GIS-based tools and databases and climate modelling instruments for long-term biodiversity management, such as the information management system and GIS Centre that SAERI is developing to close that gap for the South Atlantic.

Increased knowledge, including a valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as a better understanding of their current and potential contribution to livelihoods and economic development, is also needed to articulate better the case for investment in biodiversity, and to demonstrate the benefits to and the responsibility of EU Member States, and therefore of Europe as a whole.

6.3. The policy framework and the governance arrangements need to be streamlined and made more pertinent

While improvements have been made in recent years, there are a number of unresolved issues, inconsistencies and overlaps that impact negatively on biodiversity and on the ability to conserve and manage natural resources. The EU legislation on invasive species remains weak on overseas issues and needs, it is not applicable to OCTs, and, while ORs are included in the new EU Regulations, they are still unable to introduce specific measures to control introductions of IAS. This question of the pertinence of the level of governance and regulation is also particularly relevant to the management of fisheries resources and biodiversity, where there is an urgent need for consistent and compatible legislation at regional levels, especially in the Caribbean.

6.4. Capacity building and sustainability of interventions must be built into the collaboration and financing frameworks

National and local authorities need to build their capacities in all areas, including research, assessment, enforcement and adaptive management, and their roles in biodiversity conservation need to be made sustainable. Too often, projects have discrete and beneficial outcomes and results, but do not have lasting impacts on institutional strengthening and capacity. It is therefore imperative, as a matter of principle and good practice, to ensure that knowledge transfer and capacity building are made central policy elements in any discussion of a long-term relationship between the EU and the overseas entities.

6.5. Sustainable energy and progress towards an energy revolution behind expectations

Sustainable energy and progress towards an energy revolution were given much emphasis at the Reunion Conference, and there has been significant progress, but with some unmet expectations.

The Conference raised expectations and provoked a number of commitments, such as Green Energy Reunion Island (GERI), and there have been a number of important developments, with significant EC funded programmes, with new policies linking climate and energy (such as in New Caledonia), with new, specific legislation developed (for example in Guadeloupe), or with greater representation of OCTs in international processes related to climate and energy. Yet progress has been uneven, depending on the level of leadership and commitment displayed locally, and new concerns have arisen, for example with new investments such as the coal-fired power plant in New Caledonia. Energy policy thus remains an issue, because of impacts, but also because it reduces the ability and legitimacy of Countries, Territories and Regions to advocate at European and global levels – the vision of these entities being at the forefront of climate change is difficult to realise when policy and practice are inconsistent with that vision.

6.6. Marine issues require increased attention

Important progress has been made in marine biodiversity conservation and management in ORs and OCTs, with initiatives such as the creation of the Chagos Marine Reserve, the marine parks in Mayotte, Glorieuses and New Caledonia and the strengthening of many existing MPAs, but these are not yet commensurate with the importance and richness of this marine domain and with Europe's responsibility for its conservation and sustainable use. There is therefore a need for more coherence of European policies relevant to marine biodiversity, for the formulation and implementation of a long-term marine protection strategy overseas, and for greater consideration of and support to local marine conservation projects, regional collaboration and research by existing and future financing mechanisms.

6.7. Regional integration and cooperation require a more proactive approach and a more favourable policy environment

There is, especially since the Reunion Conference, a consensus on the policy goal of regional integration and cooperation, and much progress has been made, but European institutions and processes do not provide sufficient support to the achievement of that goal. The European Commission does not systematically participate in the critical regional mechanisms, the channels of cooperation between the EU and its partners in geographic regions (independent countries, ORs and OCTs, decentralised authorities in the larger OCTs) are insufficiently coordinated,

and there are few European incentives for cooperation between ORs and OCTs and between them and their neighbours.

6.8. EU Member States should fully integrate OCTs and ORs in their commitments and reporting to international agreements

With a better coverage of issues, achievements and trends in biodiversity in ORs and OCTs, EU Member States can demonstrate progress made towards internationally agreed goals and targets, while ORs and OCTs can gain greater visibility, and thus recognition and support, at regional and international levels. A more inclusive and representative reporting process by Member States would also serve to build capacity and develop common agendas and priorities.

7. Possible elements of a Roadmap

The Guadeloupe Conference has identified five main themes, and the analysis above suggests a number of priorities and opportunities that should be considered in the formulation of the Roadmap.

7.1. Building resilience

An important component of the biodiversity conservation and management agenda is the need to adapt to climate change, and to increase resilience and decrease vulnerability. The most critical response to this need is the support of existing institutional arrangements and natural resource governance models when they are effective and, where necessary, the design and establishment of new institutional arrangements, characterised by clarity and coherence in the allocation of mandates, responsibilities and roles at the three main levels, namely European, national and local, and by strong partnerships between the various actors.

Critical to building resilience and reducing vulnerability is the consideration of the role of ecosystems in climate change adaptation. OCTs and ORs have made much progress in ecosystem management, especially through the establishment and management of protected areas, and one of the priorities at this stage is to incorporate the adaptation agenda into the design and operation of these natural resource management regimes.

Another critical area of action is in the use of GIS-based assessment and planning methods and modelling instruments. These increasingly powerful tools can greatly enhance capacity to manage and adapt to the impacts of climate change on biodiversity.

The link between resilience and biodiversity also requires reforms in energy policy, and increased efforts towards increased energy efficiency at all levels, modes of production that minimise negative impacts, and a diversification of energy sources with a greater share given to renewable energy.

7.2. Tackling biodiversity loss

There is a need to combat invasive species, and to promote conservation, the sustainable use of biodiversity and the restoration of ecosystems. While much is being done, and much more remains to be done, in these very broad domains of intervention, the priority lies in the strengthening of the policy and legal frameworks, and especially to:

- ensure that Europe and its 28 Member states recognise the importance of ORs and OCTs in achieving the EU Biodiversity strategy by 2020, and the fact that a failure to conserve and manage biodiversity overseas would

inevitably result in a failure to achieve European and internationally agreed targets;

- encourage EU Member States without ORs or OCTs to support policies oriented to reinforcing conservation overseas, no matter the Member States to which the species or ecosystems belong;
- whenever possible and desirable, improve the relevance of locally applicable legislation in ORs and OCTs to local realities, capacities and needs, and their consistency with that of neighbouring countries and territories;
- explore the feasibility and desirability of developing and adopting specific instruments, provisions and resources in support of the application of European policies to ORs and OCTs in selected policy areas.

7.3. Developing the blue and green economy

The link between biodiversity and economy needs to be strengthened, in ways that are beneficial to nature and people. This requires that new partnerships be designed for the largest marine domain of the world, that the important role of biodiversity be recognised and that ecosystem services be properly valued.

In European overseas Countries, Regions and Territories, as indeed in all parts of the world, there is indeed a need to put an economic value on natural capital (such as ecosystem services), as this will help to increase the willingness of Member States, and local governments, the private sector and other actors to invest in biodiversity protection. Specific initiatives are therefore needed to provide this assessment and disseminate the information to relevant audiences.

The development of a new economy will also demand a more radical shift in energy policy, and strategies to guide the growth of renewable and alternatives sources. While the current global economy may not be favourable, the agenda set at the Reunion Conference remains entirely pertinent and needs to be actively pursued.

Another critical approach is the strengthening of the links between biodiversity and livelihoods, and the effective sharing of benefits from the use of biodiversity. In continental Europe, it is possible, and often more efficient, to conceive and implement discrete projects that focus on the conservation of biodiversity. In OCTs and ORs, initiatives that integrate conservation, livelihoods and development are more likely to succeed and bring a range of benefits, because of the small size of and linkages between ecosystems, especially in small islands, and because human development needs are often more critical and urgent. Programmes and projects aimed at protecting and managing biodiversity should recognise benefit-sharing as a critical objective and a valuable approach.

7.4. Advancing research and capitalising on innovative natural solutions

The Guadeloupe Conference seeks to define the most urgent and pressing challenges and to identify opportunities for developing, using and promoting natural solutions and for supporting innovative actions and development models. This is particularly important as it is increasingly recognised that islands are living laboratories for sustainable development and for the search for natural solutions such as ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation. In this regard, a few priority directions emerge.

- while current knowledge is often sufficient to identify priorities and inform action, there remains a critical need for strengthening the collection of baseline data and for taxonomic work, at the level of regions and individual territories, and in key biodiversity areas;

- actors at all levels should communicate and collaborate better, to ensure that research efforts respond, as much as possible, to local priorities, and to eliminate the disconnect that often exists between local and external actors in research. “Research forums” and institutions such as the new Caribbean Netherlands Research Institute in Sint Eustatius should play a lead role in communicating locally-identified research needs to the international research community;
- there are new innovative solutions that are being promoted but that may not have been properly assessed, for example in marine renewable energies, where there appears to be much potential, but where there are also significant risks with respect to biodiversity. There is therefore need for a strategic framework to guide the development of renewable sources of energy, and this is an area where the EC, working in collaboration with relevant partners in Member States, OCTs and ORs, should and could provide leadership;
- while evidence is growing and research progresses, there is a need to make this information available to those who are in the position to use it, and to do so in various forms, from instruments of popular dissemination to policy briefs and technical databases.

7.5. Mobilising and easing access to resources

Access to resources is a critical concern, and needs can only be met better through improved governance, the engagement of actors and effective and efficient financial mechanisms. There is therefore need for a broad framework that:

- not only ensures that available financial resources are commensurate to needs,
- but also provides the mechanisms to realise change in building resilience, tackling biodiversity loss, developing the blue and green economy, and advancing research and innovation.

Improving governance

An effective governance framework would be characterised by coherence between the various levels of responsibility and authority, the integration of local needs and realities in policy and programming, regional cooperation and integration, and adequate capacity. Needs therefore include:

- the sharing of responsibility for implementation between all actors, with the EU and its Member States providing a suitable policy framework and adequate support, with local authorities in ORs and OCTs placing biodiversity closer to the centre of their development agenda, and with stronger civil society actors playing an effective role;
- good coordination at the level of the EC, with improved collaboration between the three DGs most directly concerned, with greater operationalization of the Memorandum of Understanding between DEVCO and DG REGIO, and with the EC facilitating collaboration and providing policy coherence;
- strong regional integration and cooperation, allowing ORs and OCTs to participate fully in processes in their geographic regions, and facilitating the sharing of competence at regional level;
- joint projects and activities that foster cooperation beyond the political status, as people and institutions need to practice cooperation and see tangible benefits;

- strategic partnerships and networks that bring together local expertise and knowledge with external capacity on critical issues such as climate change (e.g., partnerships between local organisations in the ORs and OCTs and European universities or NGOs);
- mechanisms to organise and facilitate peer reviews and other forms of mutual learning and support between actors in ORs and OCTs;
- effective engagement of networks and other actors that have the mandate and capacity to represent local actors in OCTs and/or ORs and make their voices heard in European and other processes;
- strong and adequately thematic, regional or sub-regional organisations through which groups of OCTs and/or ORs can independently pursue shared agendas, pooling their resources together.

Mobilizing engagement

Six years after the Reunion Conference, there remains a strong interest in and demand for a voluntary scheme to protect and manage biodiversity. The creation of a voluntary scheme was one of the most significant and explicit recommendations coming out of the Reunion Conference, and while conditions may have changed, the concept should be retained and actively concretised, with the following elements:

- design of the successor of the BEST Preparatory Action, not only as a financing window, but also as a facilitation platform that supports policy formulation, programming, partnerships and capacity-building as well as financing, in response to locally-driven strategies, priorities and targets;
- establishment of a permanent forum to formulate and communicate research and conservation priorities;
- active development of proposals for trans-boundary management areas involving multiple ORs and/or OCTs along with neighbouring countries;
- broadening of the range of funding mechanisms accessible to ORs and OCTs;
- improved generation and sharing of knowledge as the basis for policy-making, planning and management.

Financing

While the process of designing and eventually establishing a dedicated financing mechanism is still underway, the efforts done in terms of access, thanks to flexibility on the type of projects eligible and the little co-financing requested, have to be pursued. A voluntary scheme can begin to address the finance gap, but there is a need for multiple and complementary funding sources and instruments, tailored to different contexts, e.g., small-scale, administratively streamlined funding for local projects; larger, longer-term funding for major research and management initiatives, as part of a greater effort to increase availability of resources for biodiversity in OCTs and ORs.

Among the other avenues through which access to financing could be improved and increased, an obvious priority is for ORs and OCTs, their EU Member States and the EC to give much greater attention to biodiversity in their programming, cooperation and financing agreements.

Specific opportunities to be explored and built upon include: (i) BEST and how this can continue to fund on the ground activities in the ORs and the OCTs; (ii) access to LIFE funding and how to ensure that the LIFE Regulation is applied in ways that

include and make it accessible to projects in the ORs and OCTs; (iii) the new B4Life funding scheme and ways it can be accessed; and (iv) other mechanisms such as Biodiversa3 and the EU Biodiversity for Life (B4Life) initiative.

8. Outputs of the Guadeloupe Conference

One important lesson that emerges from this rapid review of the implementation of the Message from Reunion is that major events are useful in raising issues and awareness and in promoting and effecting changes in the policy landscape, but their conclusions and recommendations must be translated into **strategic action plans** supported by effective and **sustainable implementation mechanisms** in order for them to have lasting impacts.

This confirms that it is appropriate for the Guadeloupe Conference to aim at producing a concrete Roadmap, and it suggests that it should focus on a small number of decisions and actions, or, as in the words of one of the people interviewed for this survey, in “no more than ten clear and strong recommendations” on tangible actions that Europe and its partners should take.

The “Roadmap from Guadeloupe” should therefore be a shorter, more targeted document than the Message, as it is felt that this would increase its impact, with a clear action plan for the recommendations coming out of the Conference.

These recommendations should rest on a powerful and well-articulated case for European investment, action and facilitation, and an acceptance of that case by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States, with a strong political support.

While the case needs to be articulated, many of those interviewed for this assessment warn that the Guadeloupe Conference should focus more on the cross-cutting responses to the issues, such as financing, regional cooperation and legislation, than on biodiversity and the issues affecting it.

In order to ensure that there is effective implementation, the Roadmap from Guadeloupe should be endorsed by all relevant authorities, it should define and describe **an implementation and monitoring mechanism**, it should identify resource requirements and specific responsibilities, and it should result in a governance mechanism, making use of existing networks and capacities whenever possible.

In order to optimise impact, it will also be critical to ensure that the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Roadmap are **communicated to the appropriate level**, taking into account the complexity of institutional arrangements and legal mandates in the OCTs and the ORs, and the fact that the responsibility for biodiversity resides at many levels, including decentralised institutions and municipalities in many instances. Regular and occasional events scheduled to take place in the months following the Guadeloupe Conference should therefore be used to present the Roadmap and mobilise support for the implementation of its recommendations.

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10. Selected Case Studies

Case study 1: biodiversity protection in Ascension Island

Recent developments in the UK Overseas Territory of Ascension Island illustrate the progress made in biodiversity conservation in Europe overseas, with a new legislation that creates six new nature reserves and one new sanctuary, in addition to one existing national park, resulting in one fifth of the land now covered by special measures to reduce the threat to vulnerable species.

This South Atlantic territory, which lies midway between Brazil and Africa, is home to some of the region's largest sea turtle and seabird nesting colonies, as well as many unique species of plants and invertebrates. The Island's three main turtle nesting beaches, which together support more than a half of all green turtle nesting in the South Atlantic Ocean – as many as 25,000 nests per year – are among the sites protected. The dramatic seabird nesting colonies of the Wideawake Fairs, Boatswain Bird Island and the Letterbox Peninsula, home to more than 800,000 nesting seabirds, also receive legal protection for the first time.

This development is one of the outcomes of a two-year project funded by the UK Government's Darwin Initiative to develop a national biodiversity strategy for Ascension Island. The project, which is being led by Ascension Island Government and the University of Exeter in the UK, brings together a consortium of organisations with an interest in preserving the Island's incredible natural heritage. It is coordinated by the Island's Conservation Department.

One of the important features of the process to date, which is also likely to constitute a significant factor of future success, has been an intensive and lengthy consultation process aimed at sensitising the public on proposed measures and seeking feedback and recommendations. This was part of the Darwin Initiative-funded project, and one of the useful channels of consultation has been the establishment and full involvement of a Biodiversity and Fisheries Committee, under the auspices of the Island Council.

As a result of this consultative process and on the basis of the Action Plan, the seven protected areas have been created, new legislation (with specific regulations) has been introduced, and local capacity to manage has been strengthened. In addition to its provisions in support of terrestrial conservation, the new Wildlife Protection Ordinance has an important marine conservation element, introducing powers to establish closed seasons, quotas, no-take zones and prohibited means for extracting marine resources, subject to the necessary research being undertaken to enable informed decision-making. The marine environment constitutes a priority for future work and the Conservation Department recently received funding from the Darwin Initiative to start the Ascension Island Marine Sustainability (AIMS) project that will help to establish a core marine and fisheries science programme for the Ascension Island Government.

With all the efforts and successes, Ascension Island provides a good example of what can be achieved, at local level, thanks to genuine partnerships between local and external organisations, thanks to dedicated funding, in this case from the UK's Darwin Initiative, and thanks to a well-designed and systematic process that moves from strategy to local action, with quality research and legal reform.

For more information visit the Conservation Department's website at <http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/government/conservation/>

Case study 2: BIONATURA

BIONATURA is a project initially developed by the Government of the Canary Islands, with the Governments of Madeira and the Azores subsequently joining. Over the period 2000 – 2008, it was funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Co-operation objective (formerly the INTERREG Community Initiative).

The goal of the project is to improve the conservation and management of natural resources and biodiversity through a range of activities that include research, inventories, assessments and the establishment of a database; support to protected area designation, planning and management, within the framework of the Natura 2000 Network; capacity-building activities; strategies and actions to combat desertification; as well as the production and dissemination of information and educational materials.

Fifteen years after it was originally conceived, this project provides a number of valuable examples and lessons, because:

- it illustrates how an initiative taken by one overseas entity can be extended to and foster formal collaboration with the other entities in a geographic region, with one government, in this case that of the Canary Islands, playing the coordinating role, and with the European Commission providing co-financing;
- while European funding ended in 2008, the three governments have continued to provide support and have sustained the activities;
- the project has compiled bibliographic references (scientific papers and grey literature) on the distribution of species into biodiversity databases that are still being maintained today;
- the information produced has been accepted and used at the policy level, with the Canarian Biodiversity database now constituting the official source of information on the distribution of species on the archipelago, and the Azores Biodiversity database playing a similar role in that Outermost Region and being incorporated with a similar one from the mainland;
- in addition to the databases, the project has produced several valuable publications and decision-making instruments.

For more information, visit: <http://interreg-bionatura.com/>

Case study 3: Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute

In April 2014, the Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute (CNSI) was officially opened at St. Eustatius. CNSI is a research facility that supports basic, strategic, applied, social and policy-relevant research, education and information dissemination. It has the ambition to become an authoritative expert and facility centre acknowledged in the wider Caribbean region, positioned at the intersection of scientific research, education, management and governance. The mission of this knowledge centre is to build a permanent scientific presence in the Caribbean Netherlands with research and outreach facilities and accommodation for scientists.

As a result of the political reform of the Kingdom of the Netherlands completed in 2010, The Netherlands government became responsible for the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba and their marine territories and exclusive economic zones in the Caribbean Sea, as they became special Dutch municipalities, referred to as the Caribbean Netherlands. The initial focus of the new institute is on the sustainable development of these three islands. The Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) saw this as a good opportunity to encourage quality research into relevant issues in the Caribbean. In addition to CNSI, the Ministry therefore also developed a research programme in collaboration with the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO),

OCW allocated 2.5 million Euros for the establishment of CNSI and 10 million Euros towards the NWO Caribbean research programme. Dutch researchers together with their Caribbean partners were able to submit research proposals for the first 5 million Euros in 2013. A second round will be organised in 2015. The first round led to nine approved (multi-disciplinary) projects (see www.nwo.nl) in social, earth and life sciences that will start their activities in 2014.

One of the significant features of CNSI, which is a direct result of the change of status of three of the former Netherlands Antilles, is that it will serve as a link between local research and European expertise, with the coordination and application of research happening in one of the Caribbean territories. With its commitment to multidisciplinary knowledge development and human and institutional capacity building by providing education for local schools, nature organisations and farmers, academic and professional education and training, and organising courses, workshops and meetings in cooperation with local organisations, CNSI is an innovative concept that is likely to bring significant benefit to the three islands, in the context of the greater Caribbean region.

For more information visit www.cnsi.nl

Case study 4: Codes de l'Environnement in New Caledonia

In New Caledonia, the three Provinces have the responsibility for environmental matters. Two of the three Provinces have formulated and adopted environmental laws (*Codes de l'Environnement*) that have very interesting features, because of the highly consultative process through which they were developed, of the extent to which they are tailored to the specific needs of each Province, of their detailed provisions, and of their broad and inclusive scope that covers all aspects of environmental management. The respective Provincial Assemblies adopted the *Codes* in 2008 (North Province) and 2014 (South Province).

The *Codes* are powerful and legally binding instruments that include a number of important and innovative provisions, including:

- a recognition of the cultural and heritage dimension of the environment, with specific provisions to respect and enhance the relationship between environment, identity, patrimony and culture;
- a vision of environmental management and biodiversity conservation as instruments of sustainable economic development;
- the definition of categories of protected areas, including protected landscapes and sustainable management areas, and the declaration of several new areas under each category;
- provisions for the protection and management of ecosystems and species, including requirements for environmental impact assessment and conditions for land clearing and changes in land use;
- regulations and guidelines to govern both marine resource management and fisheries as well as terrestrial resources and hunting;
- one of the first local regulations on Access and Benefit Sharing (in accordance with the provisions of the Nagoya protocol);
- an affirmation of the right of access to information and the inclusion of specific measures to facilitate stakeholder participation and representation;
- the definition of the institutional arrangements to govern enforcement of the law, including new organisations and partnerships when required.

This experience illustrates the value of policy processes that are locally driven and based on local realities and needs, but in harmony with other relevant processes. In this case, the two Provinces have made the effort to harmonize their *Codes*, and they have also ensure that the provisions would be compatible with relevant French and European policy and legislation, while at the same time taking inspiration from other countries of the region with very different legal systems and traditions.

Copies of the *Codes* can be found at

<http://www.province-nord.nc/documents/deliberations/DDEE/Code%20Environnement.pdf>
and <http://www.province-sud.nc/publications>.

Case study 5: Greenland and the Arctic Council

The case of the Arctic Council provides a good illustration of the active role a European OCT can play in important international processes at a regional level. The Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum that addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. It has eight member countries, including the Kingdom of Denmark (Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands), as well as *ad hoc* and permanent observer states, including the European Union. Indigenous peoples' organisations have also been granted Permanent Participants status in the Arctic Council. The Permanent Participants have full consultation rights in connection with the Council's negotiations and decisions.

Biodiversity, environment, sustainable development and climate change are among the Council's areas of focus, with much of the activities being led by working groups, including the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) biodiversity working group. In 2013, the CAFF released the first Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA), a comprehensive report that concluded that climate change is the most serious underlying driver of overall change in biodiversity, that it is necessary to take an ecosystem-based approach to management, and that it is important to mainstream biodiversity by making it integral to other policy fields, for example in development plans and operations. The ABA has produced a detailed scientific report and has identified 17 policy recommendations with a plan to implement these recommendations under development.

Greenland actively participates in the Council and its working groups. In 2011, Greenland co-hosted the 7th biannual Ministerial meeting of the Council, and it is represented on most working groups. Greenland also acts as Head of Delegation on behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark in two of the six working groups of the Arctic Council (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna – CAFF and Sustainable Development Working Group -SDWG). Greenland/Denmark is co-lead of the CAFF Circumpolar biodiversity-monitoring programme – CBMP with the United States. In 2006-2009 Greenland chaired the CAFF working group and was member of the ABA Steering Committee during the development of ABA.

One of the significant features of the ABA, and of the work of the Council more generally, is its focus on people and its integration of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in assessments and policy formulation. The CAFF biodiversity working group has gained valuable experience in this regard, with the challenge of balancing and harmonising very different knowledge systems, and this subject of TEK will be one of the themes of the Arctic Biodiversity Congress to be held in Norway in December 2014.

The experience of the Arctic Council is an excellent example of the manner in which biodiversity and climate change can be placed closer to the centre of development policy and international cooperation, with the full involvement of a European OCT in the processes that are directly relevant to its future.

For more information visit www.arctic-council.org and www.caff.is

Case study 6: Guadeloupe's experience in formulating a regional policy and plan for natural heritage and biodiversity

The natural heritage defines the identity of a region, and it is a factor of economic development, a guarantee of a quality environment and a patrimony that must be preserved for future generations.

The *Région Guadeloupe* has already formulated several strategic plans that cover all sectors, except biodiversity. Yet, this must be a priority for action in territories such as Guadeloupe, where much of the world's biological diversity can be found, and where the impacts of climate change are felt most directly.

In addition, the comparative advantage of the *Région* in playing the lead role in formulating a policy in this sector comes from its responsibility for physical planning and land use, with a role in reconciling development and conservation. Indeed, biodiversity challenges do not relate only to protected areas; they are also relevant to the landscapes and environments in which people live, to the preservation and enhancement of the quality of human life.

It is against this background that the *Région Guadeloupe*, in partnership with the French Government, is currently formulating a plan called the *schéma régional de la biodiversité et du patrimoine naturel (SRPNB)*. Its purpose is to define a strategy for biodiversity for the entire territory. It will therefore identify the main directions for the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the entire Guadeloupian archipelago. It will provide the reference and the basis for decision-making in the implementation of regional policy in biodiversity, as well as of the other sectoral policies of the *Région* and its various partners (State, local government agencies, scientific institutions, civil society, universities, agricultural sector, etc.). It will also inform planning and management decisions. Ultimately, in the design process and in its implementation, this plan should help to bring together all the stakeholders concerned with the natural heritage and biodiversity.

Because this strategy must be owned and validated by all the actors, a major effort is currently deployed to consult all parties, as a precondition to the formulation of the strategic orientations. To this effect, working groups have been established to focus on a number of themes, such as:

- agriculture,
- nature and urban environments
- planning and infrastructural development
- sustainable uses and livelihoods
- marine and coastal environments

On the basis of the sharing of experience among participants, analyses carried out to date have allowed for the identification of the main challenges, current strengths and weaknesses, and the status of conservation and management.

The process has also already revealed a number of priorities, that are consistent with those of the International Conference, including the fight against biodiversity loss (invasive species, restoration of degraded ecosystems, protection of species and areas, integration of nature in living spaces, payment to compensate for losses as a result of development projects), economic development based on biodiversity (blue and green economies), financing, the fight against climate change, and adaptation policies.

The plan that is currently being developed will be structured as follows

An assessment of current status, with:

- a synthesis, for the entire archipelago, of the actors, with current data and lists of actions pertaining to flora, fauna and ecosystems, in both terrestrial and marine environments;
- a diagnostic and an analysis of the challenges related to the preservation and restoration of ecological process, which represents the first part of the *SRCE (Schéma régional de cohérence écologique)*.

Strategic orientations for conservation, protection, development and knowledge of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the Guadeloupien archipelago

An action plan, including:

- an overall action plan formulated jointly with all the actors;
- specific, strategic action plans that are consistent with sections d and e of the SRCE, in accordance with existing legislation, with an identification of the instruments to be used for implementation.

A section on monitoring and evaluation, allowing for an assessment of the entire implementation process

This approach is consistent with and integrated in the relevant international, European and national contexts, and it takes into account the various policies and plans already in existence in Guadeloupe. The SRPNB is also well integrated in its Caribbean and local contexts.

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Case study 7: Implications of the European presence in the Caribbean on regional fisheries management

The case of Caribbean fisheries provides a useful lens through which to examine how the presence of European ORs and OCTs impacts on the management and sustainable use of a transboundary biodiversity resource. This short case study looks at the issue from three closely inter-related dimensions: political cooperation on resource governance; scientific and technical knowledge generation and sharing; and economic use of the resource.

The context

The Caribbean Sea is a semi-enclosed large marine ecosystem shared among nearly 30 insular and coastal nations, 5 French ORs and OCTs (plus Guiana, located outside of the Caribbean Sea, but closely associated with the region), 5 United Kingdom OCTs, 6 Dutch OCTs and Municipalities, and 2 United States territories. The presence of the ORs and OCTs puts approximately 15% of the Caribbean large marine ecosystem under European jurisdiction. The area comprises numerous smaller ecosystems shared among subsets of these countries and territories. The economic value of Caribbean fishery resources to the countries and territories of the region is substantial. Both large-scale commercial fishing and artisanal fishing are economically important for the countries and territories of the region, with the latter prevailing especially in the smaller islands. Because many fisheries are transboundary, they also play a major role both in creating and maintaining social and cultural ties between countries, and in exacerbating political conflicts. Caribbean fisheries are also exploited at commercial scale by countries outside the region, most notably Japan and Spain. It has been estimated that 35% of Caribbean fisheries are overexploited. Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing is a major and growing concern in the region and the source of many intra and extra regional conflicts.

The use and management of these shared resources is governed through a patchwork of national instruments. Currently, each of the independent countries and OCTs in the region has its own fisheries legislation and regulations. The French ORs (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guiana and St. Martin) are subject to the Common EU Fisheries Policy and the regulations derived from it.

Regional fisheries governance

The obvious need for regional cooperation on Caribbean fisheries governance has prompted a number of initiatives to establish regional governance frameworks. However, the success of these efforts has been greatly constrained by the political fragmentation of the region.

Very few regional institutions cover the entire geographic scope of the Caribbean. Among those that do, even fewer deal to any extent with fisheries management. The Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) of the UN FAO is the main forum for regional dialogue and information sharing. As an inter-governmental body its membership includes the governments of all the independent countries in the region, along with France, the Netherlands and the UK representing their ORs and OCTs. The EU is also a member. One of WECAFC's stated objectives is "to contribute to improved governance through institutional arrangements that encourage cooperation amongst members". The members of WECAFC have periodically considered proposals to transform the body into a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) with the ability to set regional fisheries policy and harmonise national legislation. These proposals have been resisted by the independent countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), partly out of

concerns that a RFMO comprising all the countries of the region would be dominated by its most politically and economically powerful members, particularly the EU and the USA. The EU and its member states in WECAFC on the other hand appear to support transforming WECAFC into a RFMO, with the EU member recommending at the last meeting of the Commission in March 2014 that a cost benefit analysis be carried out (WECAFC 2014).

Although smaller in scope, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is also pursuing regional policy coordination, at least among the CARICOM countries. The CRFM has developed a Common Fisheries Policy, which the Ministers responsible for fisheries in all CARICOM Member States have endorsed. It only awaits signature by CARICOM Heads of Government, at which time it will have the status of a legal treaty. Three UK OCTs (Anguilla, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands) are Members of CRFM. It is the understanding of the CRFM Secretariat that they can seek dispensation from the UK to also become signatories to the Policy; however, this has not yet been tested.

The non-participation of ORs and OCTs who share fisheries resources with CRFM members in this common policy framework is an acknowledged constraint to its management effectiveness. The CRFM has sought to engage those countries in the development of the policy, with varying degrees of success. Bonaire and Curaçao have indicated interest in becoming Associate Members of the CRFM, but none have yet made a concrete request. There has been less progress in engaging with the ORs, at least at a political level. It has not been clear to the CRFM Secretariat whether the appropriate channels of communication should be through the ORs themselves, the French Government or the EU.

A third instrument for achieving some objectives of regional fisheries governance is the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) of the UN Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region, commonly known as the Cartagena Convention. Its Annexes commit countries to take measures protecting listed threatened and endangered marine species. All the European countries present in the Caribbean as well as most Caribbean countries have ratified the Cartagena Convention, which was also signed by the European Economic Commission. Around half those countries have ratified the SPAW Protocol; those that have include the Netherlands and the UK. UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme provides the Secretariat for the Convention.

Finally, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), a grouping of 6 countries and 3 UK OCTs within the Lesser Antilles, is working on the development of an OECS ocean governance policy, and has been reaching out to involve other OCTs and ORs within the sub-region. The OECS has had some success with environmental policy harmonisation among its Member States; so this is a potentially important initiative, depending on how effectively it can articulate with other policy frameworks.

Perhaps the most promising avenue for sorting through this complex patchwork of regional governance arrangements to arrive at a unifying policy framework for the region is the Caribbean Large Ecosystem Management (CLME) project, a collaboration of CRFM, WECAFC, the Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organisation (OSPESCA), the University of the West Indies and other partners, with funding from the Global Environment Facility and with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) serving as the implementing agency. The first phase of the project identified key transboundary issues and produced recommendations on fisheries governance (Mahon et al. 2013) that are expected to provide a starting point for further assessment and dialogue during the next phase of the project (to be known as CLME+), which is due to start in 2015. The CLME is well

placed to facilitate that discussion given that the CLME partnership includes 25 Caribbean countries plus the US, WECAFC, CRFM, OSPESCA, the Caribbean Environment Programme, the OECS and a host of other institutions that play a role in regional fisheries governance. However, the OCTs, ORs and European countries with a presence in the region are not part of the partnership and therefore have no formal status in any CLME dialogues on regional governance.

As all discussions around regional governance evolve, one issue that will have to be resolved is the status of OCTs, as it is currently unclear what liberty they have to enter independently into regional governance arrangements, or how they could be effectively represented by the European countries that they are associated with, since they do not share common legislative frameworks.

Technical and scientific collaboration

The barriers to cooperation between Europe and its Caribbean neighbours are less daunting at the technical and scientific level. There are well-established relationships between technical and scientific institutions throughout the region, including European institutions with bases in ORs or OCTs. For example, the SPAW Regional Activity Centre, which is hosted by the Government of France and located in Guadeloupe, has facilitated technical cooperation and joint research between neighbouring countries and territories regardless of their political status. The French ocean research institute Ifremer has spearheaded a number of collaborative activities among countries of the region from its bases in Martinique and Guiana, and has also collaborated regularly with regional institutions such as CRFM and the University of the West Indies. The MAGDELESA project, developed by a WECAFC working group on fish aggregation devices, is coordinated by Ifremer Martinique and funded by the EU. It presently involves five independent Caribbean countries plus Martinique and Guadeloupe, with oversight from WECAFC. However, Ifremer's regional engagement has fluctuated over the years, depending on the interest and commitment of key personnel in the regional offices. The Dutch Caribbean Natural Alliance has also brokered research and management partnerships across political divides. Both the CRFM and the CLME have had some success over the years at involving ORs and OCTs in research and training activities.

The main barrier to technical and scientific collaboration between Caribbean and European institutions is funding. Most of the funding sources that have made regional fisheries research and collaboration possible exclude ORs, OCTs and European partners. Examples include GEF financing for the CLME project and, ironically, EU funding through the CARIFORUM mechanism for development of the fisheries sector (ACP Fish II), which is available only to countries that are part of the ACP development framework agreement with the EU.

As parts of the UN system, WECAFC and the Caribbean Environment Programme have sometimes been able to help fill funding gaps that impede cooperation; however, their own funding is often subject to rules excluding specific countries and their territories. Institutions supporting regional technical collaboration such as CRFM and the CLME Project Coordinating Unit have the impression that European countries and the EU itself could do much more than they are doing to financially support the involvement of ORs, OCTs and European institutions in these initiatives.

Economic and trade issues

European trade regulations introduce a set of issues that unintentionally may have negative implications for biodiversity conservation. European standards on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) have become a major barrier to legal trade for Caribbean fishing enterprises and especially small-scale fishers. Through the

modalities of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and Caribbean countries, the EU is providing capacity support to Caribbean governments on SPS. However, the regulations continue to have the effect of a non-tariff barrier, especially for artisanal fishers, with perverse effects on fisheries management efforts.

This barrier contributes to the maintenance of a significant and economically important inter-island trade between independent Caribbean countries and Caribbean ORs and OCTs, which operates illegally and thus outside the scope of national or regional management. Strong social ties between the islands make the problem more difficult to address, and it is a trade that is often detrimental to fishers in the importing countries, with non-fishers often controlling this illegal trade and market.

The stringent “traceability requirements” in the EU regulations regarding IUU fishing put up another barrier to trade for many Caribbean fishers from European entities as well as neighbouring independent states, particularly regarding overseas European markets in which the evasion practiced in inter-island trade is not possible. Non-EU fishers are particularly affected by a new EU regulation that requires them to have catch certificates attached to their landings intended for export. At the same time, it has been alleged that the French ORs are a contributor to IUU fishing, with some operators based there taking advantage of the weak enforcement capability of neighbouring countries to fish illegally in their waters.

WECAFC, CFRM, CEP and stakeholder institutions such as the Caribbean Network of Fisheries Organisations are all deeply concerned about the impacts of IUU fishing and the role that stringent EU trade standards play in encouraging it. However, in the absence of a political mechanism that involves all actors, including the EU, for addressing them, no hard solutions are possible.

Among the measures and instruments put in place by the EU, it should also be noted that the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) includes a compensation plan for ORs that provides EU fishers with a fixed amount per unit of fish landed, as a compensation for costs higher than those of mainland fishers, in addition to their eligibility to all the benefits afforded fishers in continental Europe. This measure, which will be implemented from 2015, could have negative impact on fish stocks in the region, especially in the context of a significant increase in EU assistance to the fisheries sector in ORs, which will most likely result in increased efficiency of the fishing effort.

Questions for moving forward

This case study raises a number of questions that could guide thinking on how to make the European presence in the Caribbean a greater asset to regional fisheries management and marine biodiversity conservation. For example:

1. Are there ways to build upon the foundation of good technical and scientific collaboration to overcome the barriers to political cooperation on governance issues?
2. How could European finance be more effectively directed towards supporting regional, rather than only national or subregional, marine resource governance and fisheries management?
3. What potential exists over the medium to long term to harmonise fisheries management policy and legislation across the countries sharing the Caribbean marine ecosystem, in ways that equitably benefit all concerned parties while sustaining the resource base?

4. How could there be greater coherence between programmes and financial instruments applicable to ORs and/or OCTs and those available to ACP countries and regionally through development funds?
5. How could European ORs and OCTs participate and be more effectively represented in regional institutions and governance arrangements?

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Case study 8: Life+ Cap DOM project

The programme for the Conservation of Priority Avifauna in the French Overseas Departments 2010-2015, known as the Life+ Cap DOM, provides much needed human and technical resources and most importantly important financial resources in support of conservation and management of world endangered bird species and a threatened habitat in three French Outermost Regions, namely French Guiana, Martinique and Reunion Island. It began in 2010 for a period of 5 years.

The programme is coordinated at the European level by the *Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux/BirdLife France (LPO)*, with local coordination by three NGOs as beneficiaries of the programme, GEPOG-French Guiana, AOMA-Martinique and SEOR⁹ in Reunion Island together with the Reunion Island National Park. The number of technical and financial partners is considerable (17) and their participation very constructive.

LIFE is the only dedicated budget line for the environment in the European Union. Its main aim is the application of the Birds and Habitats directives. Since 2007, the French outermost regions have become eligible to the section on nature and biodiversity. LIFE is the translation of European environmental policies and strategies into concrete actions on the ground by co-funding pilot and demonstration projects. This call for projects, issued annually, currently makes available a minimum of 60% funding to projects whose objective is to improve the conservation status of species and natural habitats.

There are valuable lessons to be learned from this LIFE+ CAP DOM programme, especially since this is one of only two Life+ projects implemented in the French ORs during the initial period of their eligibility for Life+ support. LIFE+ CAP DOM is the second project in the French ORs but the first project for the conservation of fauna and networking and exchange of *savoir-faire* between several French ORs and their NGOs.

Some of the lessons learned are linked to the rigorous administrative and financial procedures of Life, which demand a fast learning curve and reinforce capacity within the organisations. For example, there is a requirement that 25% of funds be used for concrete projects with measurable indicators. This does not take into account the fact that initiatives in ORs, as well as in OCTs, require significant investments in governance, management systems, awareness-raising and other domains in which impact measurement is more difficult. The initial proposal in 2008 was rejected due to this requirement.

Challenging but not insurmountable are the disbursement schedules and conditions, and their impact on cash flow for small sized NGOs can be considerable. Indeed, it is only thanks to the fact that Life+ Cap DOM was spearheaded by a strong organisation with years of experience in running LIFE programmes, the *LPO/BirdLife France*, that the programme could be implemented without significant delays or financial difficulties. This experience confirms that a funding mechanism such as Life should not be taken on lightly, but when used with caution and control can bring remarkable results not only in the development of the organisations involved but can also create new dynamics between a range of different actors including government agencies, research institutions and national and local civil society organisations together with their volunteers. It has shown, in all three Regions that capacities can be strengthened by building bridges and fostering cooperation on concrete projects,

⁹ GEPOG Groupe d'Etude et de Protection des Oiseaux en Guiana ; AOMA : Association Ornithologique de la Martinique ; SEOR Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques de la Réunion

and has also helped with the socio-economic development of the French ORs with the creation and the consolidation of jobs in the conservation sector.

Life+ Cap DOM's is a good example of an institutional arrangement that allows for the coordination and management of a complex programme by an organisation experienced in the procedures of LIFE, and at the same time providing capacity building in the local partners thanks to an effective coordination mechanism, and with concrete activities designed and spearheaded by local partners, using their expertise and creativity, and ensuring that approaches used are suited to local needs and realities.

Because of its attention to local needs, one of the areas in which this programme has been particularly innovative and successful has been to show the socio-economic impact of conservation projects. For example in French Guiana, through the creation of two new full time permanent posts, the GEPOG is working to improve the protection of the Guianan Cock-of-the-rock and improve tourists' experiences in nature. This has involved reducing disturbance to one of the breeding sites of the Cock-of-the-rock within very easy access from Cayenne. Until recently the lack of organised access was causing disturbance to the birds. In order to assure the presence of this spectacular species for tour operators and their visitors in the future, a structured pathway was installed limiting public access but at the same time improving the experience by provision of information panels about the species and its biology. This management will assure that this spectacular forest bird should continue to breed in this spot, and so tour operators should be able to continue to satisfy the demands of their visitors by providing a quality experience; Cayenne will benefit economically from their presence.

The LIFE+ Cap DOM programme is recognised by the European Commission as an ambitious initiative, which has effective networking within and across French ORs and is producing valuable results in terms of innovative methods for the conservation of four world-endangered bird species and a rare habitat. This programme has confirmed the potential of this rigorous funding mechanism, and it has helped build the capacity of at least two of the partners, not only in executing conservation work, but also in project management and fundraising.

More information and videos covering different aspects of the programme can be found at www.lifecapdom.org

Case study 9: Marine protected areas in New Caledonia

New Caledonia has responsibility for the management of a large maritime zone, and activities conducted and measures adopted by this country provide an excellent illustration of an integrated, ecosystem-based process and system that are part of a vision of sustainable development and that involve all possible levels of responsibility and authority, from local communities to regional and international arrangements.

As an outcome of years of efforts and of a number of initiatives in coastal and marine conservation and management in New Caledonia, what has emerged is a complex, multi-layered mosaic that allows for the participation of all interested parties and that reflects a vision of integrated governance that ensures sustainable use of resources, taking into account current and potential economic benefits as well as conservation requirements.

The main components of that mosaic are:

- the launch, in August 2012, by the President of the South Province, of an exercise called the strategic analysis of the maritime space of New Caledonia, with the objective of identifying, in a participatory and systematic manner, the conservation and sustainable development challenges and opportunities in the entire marine zone, as well as management options;
- the adoption, in April 2014, on the basis of the results of the strategic analysis, of the decree creating the *Parc naturel de la Mer de Corail*, a large protected area that covers the entirety of New Caledonia's maritime space (1,291,000 km²);
- at the level of the Country, a *Conservatoire des Espaces Naturels* that plays a role in managing selected areas, and in supporting research, information and policy work;
- the inscription of the Lagoons of New Caledonia as a World Heritage Site (2008);
- a number of protected areas established and managed by the Provinces, notably under the provisions of their *Codes de l'Environnement*;
- the involvement of civil society in the management of most protected areas, either directly or through participation and representation in management committees;
- a grouping (*Association*) of the local management committees.

These efforts and arrangements must also be placed in their regional context, in which New Caledonia has taken, or is participating in, several important initiatives, notably:

- the issuance, by Australia and New Caledonia, in March 2010, of a joint statement towards the sustainable management of the Coral Sea, through scientific cooperation, networking and partnerships among managers, and capacity-building to support transboundary management;
- participation in the Network of the World's Large-Scale Marine Managed Areas, known as Big Ocean, in order to share experiences and approaches;
- participation in Pacific Oceanscape, a framework established by 23 countries and territories to conserve, sustainably manage and maintain the cultural integrity of this vast region of islands and ocean;

- participation in PACIOCEA, a project to strengthen Ocean Conservation and Management in European territories of the tropical South Pacific and other countries, which is funded by the European Union, managed by the French MPA Agency and coordinated by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), in collaboration with other partners;
- a strong partnership and growing collaboration with the Cook Islands to share experiences and capacities in strategic planning and management in marine areas.

This experience illustrates, in the case of one of the largest OCTs, the value of an approach that is anchored in local institutions and processes, promotes consultation and participation, begins on a small scale and grows over time, develops new instruments suited to local conditions, uses systematic processes and appropriate instruments such as mapping tools, generates and builds on political commitments, places itself in a regional context, and benefits from European and other international partnerships and support. In this way, capacities are built, conservation and management regimes are relevant and durable, and investments are more effective and more efficient.

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Case study 10: Saba's approach to marine biodiversity conservation

Saba National Marine Park (SNMP), established in 1987 and managed by a non-profit community institution, the Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF), has been long recognised for the quality of its management. Contributing factors include a well-considered zoning system and management plan; strong collaboration and support from the local government, residents and resource users; a succession of excellent park managers; and dedicated staff. However, because of its small size, the SNMP can make only a limited contribution to marine biodiversity conservation. Over the years, Saba has undertaken a range of measures to enhance and expand on the conservation achievements of the SNMP.

In 2010 it established the Saba Bank National Park 5 km off Saba, thus adding a 2200 square km area of high biodiversity importance to the marine area under the management of the SCF. The Saba Bank is an important fisheries replenishment zone for the entire eastern Caribbean. Application of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding the Dutch Caribbean has made it possible to exclude all fishing except by Saba's own fleet of 10 vessels. No anchoring is permitted for vessels over 300 tons, and surveillance and enforcement are carried out regularly by the park management unit and the Dutch coast guard. The Dutch Government and local partners successfully lobbied for the area to be designated a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area by the International Maritime Organisation in 2012. As a result, the area is closed to heavy marine traffic. An active programme of research and monitoring is also in place.

At the sub-regional scale, the SCF management team is working with neighbouring Dutch and French OCTs to establish Marine Mammal and Shark Sanctuaries covering the extent of their combined EEZs. CEP's SPAW Regional Activity Centre in Guadeloupe has facilitated collaboration with neighbouring French OCTs and other countries of the region through support for joint workshops between countries and other activities.

In an innovative partnership among the ORs and OCTs, Saba is teaming up with other countries in the Dutch, French and British Caribbean as well as the Bahamas on a lionfish control proposal to the LIFE Plus EU funding facility. The involvement of the French ORs offers Saba and the other OCTs access to the facility, while the JNCC is coordinating proposal preparation.

These efforts at expanding the geographic scope of marine management are essential for achieving objectives of biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries, but assuring a high level of management quality is also critical. SNMP managers believe that the zoning system now needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes in usage patterns since the Park was established.

The SCF has been more successful than some OCT conservation agencies in securing funding for its marine protected areas. Direct support from the Dutch Government has increased considerably since the 2010 reorganisation through which Saba became a Special Municipality of the Netherlands. One result is that SNMP user fees, once the major source of revenue, have declined in importance. In 2013, they accounted for less than 20% of the total budget of the SCF.

SNMP and the Saba Bank National Park demonstrate that high quality management is possible even when local capacity and resources are very limited. Saba's marine biodiversity efforts also illustrate some innovative ways for expanding the geographic scale of management through transboundary and regional collaboration to increase conservation impact and build long-term resilience.

Case study 11: South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute

The South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) is a recent initiative of OCT governments that addresses many of the weaknesses and gaps identified in this review, particularly *knowledge generation* and *regional integration*, but also *financing*, *capacity building* and *attention to marine issues*.

SAERI is an academic research institute established in 2012 by the Falkland Islands Government in collaboration with the governments of the other South Atlantic overseas territories of the UK. The Falkland Islands Government, the South Georgia and Sandwich Islands Government and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Initial provided start-up funding. SAERI provides a mechanism for research collaboration among the range of research groups operating in the OCTs of the South Atlantic, pooling expertise and managing research partnerships to overcome the capacity constraints of individual OCTs. SAERI is also developing partnerships with academic research institutions in the UK, Europe and elsewhere. These partnerships have already generated grants for collaborative research projects and facilitated SAERI's hosting of several PhD students.

SAERI seeks to generate knowledge that can support improved ecosystem management by exploiting the demand from researchers to undertake work in pristine, little studied environments. It offers a means through which the OCTs can develop and promote a coherent South Atlantic research agenda. It also provides a vehicle for enhancing the economic value of research in the region and transforming that value into improved management and indigenous capacity-building.

One of the biggest obstacles to effective management is the lack of baseline data that can be used for spatial planning and modelling future scenarios. To address this weakness, SAERI is developing the South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre, supporting baseline data collection across the region and pulling it together into a centralized system with hubs in each of the participating OCTs. Once fully developed, the System will make it possible for the OCTs to model the long-term effects on ecosystems of climate change or projected land use changes.

SAERI is an ambitious and innovative indigenous response to the issues discussed in this report, and it has already demonstrated its value. However, in the current difficult research funding environment for OCTs, its long-term viability and growth are by no means assured.

For more information see the SAERI website: <http://www.south-atlantic-research.org>