



Biodiversity is life



Biodiversity is our life

Island Biodiversity

The Earth's 100,000 islands are exceptionally rich reservoirs of biodiversity. Environmentally fragile and economically vulnerable, they are home to some of the Earth's most exclusive life forms and ecosystems.

The importance of these ecosystems becomes even greater when we remember that over 600 million island inhabitants depend on these ecosystem services for food, water, shelter, medicines and other natural resources needed to sustain their daily lives. Some of the most spectacular coral reefs can be found surrounding islands. A healthy, coral colony helps regulate carbon dioxide and provides sanctuary to a variety of aquatic life.

The Convention's programme of work on Island Biodiversity aims to halt biodiversity loss and in turn enhance the wellbeing of islanders. National governments, NGOs and development agencies have established a cooperative platform called the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), which in turn supports groundbreaking regional conservation projects such as the Micronesia Challenge, and the Caribbean and Coral Triangle initiatives.

The GLISPA is one of the mechanisms to assist islands in conserving and sustainably using the natural resources that support the people living on them. It also promotes collaboration among island nations and with all nations: people share skills, knowledge and technologies, and unite their efforts to build common grounds to make a change for the better.

Island ecosystems are visibly unbalanced and species are threatened with extinction, with clear negative effects on human beings. Main causes of island species extinction are habitat destruction, invasive alien species, tourism development, climate change, natural disasters, overexploitation, pollution and waste.



Convention on
Biological Diversity

www.cbd.int/island



Fast Facts

- ▶ Islands cover about 3% of the world's surface yet harbour a disproportional amount of biodiversity, and endemic species in particular
- ▶ One third of the world's conservation hotspots are islands
- ▶ Of 724 recorded animal extinctions in the last 400 years about half were island species
- ▶ At least 90% of bird species that have become extinct in that period were island-dwellers
- ▶ 12 of the 18 centres of marine endemism are around islands
- ▶ Seven of the 10 coral reef hotspots surround islands
- ▶ Many island species are endemic
- ▶ Over 90% of Hawaiian species are endemic
- ▶ 50% of all plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians in Mauritius are endemic
- ▶ The Seychelles has the highest number of endemic amphibians in the world
- ▶ Cuba has 18 endemic mammals, while nearby mainland Guatemala and Honduras only have three each
- ▶ Madagascar has over 8000 endemic species, the highest number of endemic species in sub-Saharan Africa – and has vowed to protect 30% of its territory by 2020
- ▶ Islands demonstrate the impacts of climate change and invasive species far before they are visible on larger land masses
- ▶ Islands are the most damaged by climate change without having contributed to it in any significant manner
- ▶ Small island developing States are among those with the most alarming rate of biodiversity loss.

Learn More

The Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) ▶ www.cbd.int/island/glispa.shtml

The Micronesia, Caribbean and Coral Triangle initiatives

▶ www.nature.org/initiatives/protectedareas/features/art24892.html

UNEP Island website ▶ islands.unep.ch

The International Coral Reef Action Network ▶ www.icran.org/action-csi.html

Palau Conservation Society ▶ www.palau-pcs.org

Small Island Developing States Network ▶ www.sidsnet.org/1d.html

More ▶ www.cbd.int/island/websites

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