



## Opening Statement

# EU overseas entities move centre stage on climate change agenda, says IUCN

**St Denis, Reunion Island, Monday July 7, 2008 (IUCN)** A top level summit on strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss in EU overseas entities and Small Island States starts today in Reunion Island (7-11 July).

*“This is an unprecedented conference bringing together for the first time the EU’s seven outermost regions and 21 overseas countries and territories,” says IUCN’s Jean-Philippe Palasi. “The world can no longer ignore the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss in the EU’s overseas entities.”*

The conference is an event of the French Presidency of the European Union, and brings together as well as governments from the EU and Small Island Developing States, international and regional organizations, research institutes, civil society and the private sector.

The conference is organized by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), the Regional Council of Reunion Island, the French Observatory for the Impacts of Global Warming (ONERC) and the French Ministry of Internal Affairs, Overseas and Territorial Collectivities.

EU territories and overseas regions have till now been often overlooked and received insufficient attention from international and EU environmental policies. As a result of this conference, these entities will be less alone, have a stronger voice and forge firmer links with their neighbours and the EU in the fight to preserve nature and work against the negative impacts of climate change.

Ranging from tropical islands to polar regions these EU overseas outposts may in some cases be small, but their natural heritage makes them giants. At the same time, many are developing quickly, experiencing strong population growth. Faced with huge challenges, they have many innovative strategies to share and reinforce. This must lead to the creation of a new dimension to EU environmental policy, showing the way for others dealing with the climate change crisis.

As part of the conference IUCN is launching a new report, *Climate Change and Biodiversity in the European Union Overseas Entities*.

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