



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat
to: delegations

Subject: Reunion Conference on Europe's overseas areas faced with climate change and biodiversity loss
– Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached some information from the Presidency concerning the above Conference. This is to be submitted to the Environment Council under other business at its meeting on 20 and 21 October 2008.

Information note

**Reunion Conference on Europe's overseas areas
faced with climate change and biodiversity loss**

The Conference entitled "*The European Union and overseas areas: strategies in response to climate change and biodiversity loss*", held in Reunion from 7 to 11 July 2008, was an official French Presidency event, organised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the French national global warming impact monitoring centre (ONERC) and the Reunion region, with French government support. In the context of steps by the European Commission to renew the European strategy towards the outermost regions and to modernise association relations with the overseas countries and territories, that Conference was designed to convey the richness of and environmental issues faced by Europe's overseas areas and to highlight their demonstration and pilot role in the face of climate change.

The Conference was attended by over 400 participants (representatives from the EU's seven outermost regions and 21 overseas countries and territories, delegates from EU Member States, representatives from the European institutions and from some developing small island states, and members of international and regional organisations, research institutes, civil society and the private sector).

Europe's overseas areas enjoy an exceptionally rich and varied biodiversity, constituting prime world heritage for the European Union as well as a key factor in their economic, social and cultural potential. That heritage faces major threats, possibly more so than elsewhere on account of the geographical situation, island nature and small size of most such areas.

On top of the well-known threats of habitat destruction, pollution, over-exploitation and also invasive alien species comes climate change, to which such areas are often particularly vulnerable. There is here a pressing need for Community-wide consideration of how to help such areas maintain their biodiversity and combat climate change and its effects. Despite having ties with only some of the EU's Member States, being geographically remote and enjoying a special status in the case of overseas countries and territories, such areas are nonetheless located in regions of global environmental importance and in the vicinity of countries with which the European Union as a whole cooperates closely. Europe's overseas areas thus provide the EU with considerable opportunities to share experience, step up regional cooperation and development aid policies and assert its global contribution to combating biodiversity loss and climate change.

The Presidency will be setting in hand, with Member States and the European Commission, consideration of how to respond to the recommendations emerging from the Reunion Conference on Europe's overseas areas faced with climate change and biodiversity loss.

