# **Brussels in Brief**

Consedoes not apply in OCTs.

The great majority of the EU overseas entities are islands, with the exception of French Guiana. Island ecosystems cover only 5% of the global land area, however they are known to host around one-third of the worldas threatened species. Consequently, islands are one of the main current focal points for biodiversity conservation. The EU overseas entities are also unique in terms of their biodiversity and î ve of the 34 biodiversity hotspots are actually located on these islands. The integrity of island ecosystems, including the EU overseas entities, is however seriously threatened. For example, the impacts of climate change (e.g., sea-level rise) and the introduction of invasive alien species (IAS) pose a high risk to islands and their biodiversity. In addition, overexploitation of natural resources, such as unsustainable mining practices in French Guiana, is known to negatively affect biodiversity in both ORs and OCTs.

The ORs and OCTs form an exceptional, and highly threatened, biodiversity network distributed across the globe. The EU has recognised the importance of these areas and it has also acknowledged its own key role in supporting the conservation of these unique ecosystems.

This issue of *Brussels in Brief* outlines the main international and EU policy framework for conservation of biodiversity in the EU overseas entities. The Newsletter also brieï y discusses the future challenges for improving conservation of biodiversity in the EU ORs and OCTs.

## Main international biodiversity policy framework for **ORsand OCTs**

There are a number of international policies that set the currentworldwide objectives for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity on islands. These policies outline speciî c actions and measures to be taken at global, regional and national level to protect island ecosystems. Given that the EU overseas entities are mainly island, these policies also provide the main guidelines for protection of biodiversity in these regions. They also set the main framework for regional cooperation between the EU ORs and OCTs and other island States.

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The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) forms the main international framework for conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity. In 2006 the CBD established a programmative) of workarfoldungerd specially viological consequence i cafocus

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biodiversity within the context of EU development cooperation and external assistance (i.e., the Message from Paris). This call also highlighted the need to promote biodiversity issues in the context of cooperation with the OCTs.

As regards î nancial support for biodiversity conservation, ORs are eligible to receive funding within the overall EU î nancing framework established to support conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within the Community. During the current funding period (2007à2013), a nuw



As regards î sheries, the world& oceans are suffering from a severe depletion of î sh stocks due to overî shing. This problem is also prominent in many ORs and OCTs (e.g., the UK and French OCTs, St Pierre & Miquelon, and Montserrat). At the EU level, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) governs the extraction of and trade in î sheries resources in the EU. The CFP also regulates EU î shing activities outside the EU, including in OCT waters.

The CFP was reviewed in 2002 with the aim of improving the integration of environmental and biodiversity concerns into EU î sheries activities. As a consequence, the CFP& main goal is to manage î sheries for both stock conservation and environmental purposes (according to the CFP Basic Regulation 2371/2002). These goals also apply to EU î shing ï eets operating outside the Community& territorial waters, including the OCTs. However, there are still several concerns regarding the effectiveness of the CFP& environmental provisions, e.g., their implementation in securing sustainable extraction of î sh stocks and preventing negative impacts of î shing activities on marine ecosystems.

#### Future issues and challenges

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There are significant differences between the existing frameworks for biodiversity conservation in the EU overseas entities. In general, the Spanish and Portuguese ORs are

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The EU overseas entities are all facing similar threats to their biodiversity and ecosystems. Thus, improving regional cooperation between and among ORs and OCTs could play an important role in facilitating the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in these regions. In addition, establishing cooperation with the broader group of neighbouring States, including the African, Caribbean and Paciî c (ACP) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), could further support these endeavours.

Examples of regional cooperation aiming to support the sustainable development of island States and territories, including the OCTs, already exist. For instance, the Paciî c Islands Forum assists cooperation between the Paciî c islands. The Forum, established in 1971, also includes a number of EU OCTs as members (New Caledonia and French Polynesia) or observers (Wallis and Futuna) to the initiative. In 2005, the Paciî c Islands Forum adopted a strategic plan (i.e., the Paciî c Plan) to strengthen regional cooperation and integration between the islands. Endorsing sustainable development, including conservation of biodiversity, plays an important role in the future vision for the area.

The EU could play a key role in facilitating the establishment of regional cooperation between its overseas entities and also between these entities and their neighbouring States. This cooperation could, in particular, focus on supporting the exchange of knowledge and best practices related to addressing threats to biodiversity and ecosystems. In addition, possibilities for joint actions between the ORs, OCTs and their neighbours to prevent and mitigate these threats should be further promoted.

In this context, a conference addressing the current environmental challenges in the EU overseas entities will take place in Reunion, 7à11 July 2008. The conference, organized by IUCN, is one of the oficial high-level events taking place under the EU French Presidency during Juneà December 2008. The objective of this event is to initiate a political process that will lead to improving the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the EU overseas entities. In addition, the conference aims to catalyse further cooperation between the overseas entities and the neighbouring ACP countries and SIDS.

Most of the biodiversity within the EU is hosted by its overseas regions, thus safeguarding the unique species and ecosystems in the ORs and OCTs plays a key role in reaching the EU goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Furthermore, protection of the natural environment and sustainable use of biodiversity resources is essential to secure the sustainable development of ORs and OCTs in the future. This creates a clear case for the EU to step up its efforts to support biodiversity conservation in its most remote regions.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Paciî c Islands Forum: http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/ about-us/the-paciî c-plan/