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European Union–Indian Ocean Commission cooperation

The European Union grants EUR 15 million in support of an enhanced regional cooperation for sustainable biodiversity management in the Eastern and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean region

The signing ceremony of the agreement for a regional biodiversity programme of EUR 15 million was held today in Seychelles (State House, Victoria) during the closing ceremony of the 28th Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The programme, which will be implemented by the IOC, aims at assisting six countries, namely Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Kenya and Tanzania, over the next five years in fostering regional cooperation for the sustainable management and use of biodiversity, and in promoting the contribution of biodiversity to improved livelihoods.

The Eastern and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (ESA-IO) region includes island and coastal States with highly vulnerable natural assets such as extensive coastlines, offshore islands and extensive coastal and marine exclusive economic zones. The region is characterised by its rich biodiversity and endemic species which plays a central role in poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Many countries in the region have signed or ratified regional and international conventions related to biodiversity and bio-safety such as the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity. However, many of them also lack the capacity to implement fully the complex provision of the growing body of international and regional laws. Moreover, many environment plans, strategies, legal and institutional frameworks of countries in the region need to be updated.

"The EU acknowledges the role of biodiversity conservation, sustainable management and use of natural resources in the sustainable development of the Eastern and Southern Africa – Indian Ocean region. The European Union calls for an enhanced recognition of the contribution of biodiversity in improving livelihoods. As a result, the European Union is committed to supporting the countries of the region in managing and using their natural resources in a sustainable manner ", said Alessandro Mariani, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Mauritius, for the Seychelles and the Union of Comoros.

The Programme for the Coastal, Marine and Island Specific Biodiversity Management in the ESA-IO aims at developing and strengthening national and regional capacities for sustainable participatory management of coastal, marine and island specific biodiversity.

The EUR 15 million-programme will be implemented over five years in Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Kenya and Tanzania. Reunion Island (France) will participate in the programme with its own financial resources and other funds oriented to supporting European regions development.

The programme has been developed following consultations with stakeholders in the beneficiary countries which confirmed the needs for improved biodiversity management and use. Activities will focus on capacity building, sensitisation, and information-sharing of biodiversity data and best practises as well as on a grants scheme to give opportunity to Non State Actors, including local communities, to develop and implement small biodiversity management projects, including revenue-generating projects such as small-scale fisheries, aquaculture and farming.

The programme will be implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission and will be based on a network of active stakeholders at national level. They will share information and best practices to ensure the smooth implementation of actions in each country.

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