

EU supports ecological preservation and resilience in Seychelles' World Heritage Sites with a €767,000 grant

Ambassador Alessandro Mariani, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Seychelles, has signed a 766,697€ grant contract with the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) to finance a project mainstreaming the management of invasive species in Seychelles World Heritage Sites (WHS), i.e Aldabra Atoll and Vallée de Mai on Praslin.

"In a world confronted with alarming biodiversity loss and Climate Change threats, preserving ecological integrity and enhancing resilience become more and more essential to humankind. Aldabra and Vallée de Mai WHS are renowned high biodiversity spots, and the European Union is pleased to support the efforts of Seychelles in preserving these unique nature icons".

The European Union contribution will represent about 79% of the total cost of the project which is estimated 972,000 EUR over a period of four year. SIF intends to start the first activities in February 2011 with project partners and associates.

The project is multi-faceted and will develop, implement and mainstream a strategic programme in which an ecosystem approach will be applied to limit the spread, and assess and reduce the impact, of Invasive Alien Species (IAS).

The action will directly benefit Aldabra and Vallée de Mai WHS as well as areas affecting these sites including Praslin National Park, Mahé and Assumption island, through an enhanced understanding of complexities and dynamics of IAS threats, the elimination of at least two IAS threatening WHS, control of major plant IAS in a core zone of Praslin National Park, and the integration of IAS control and management into operations in and beyond WHS, including a sound management model in place

In parallel, the activities will aim at consolidating and sharing lessons learned for national, regional and international benefit to generate strategic partnerships through the sharing of best practice models, raise awareness of IAS issues among stakeholders, enhance institutional capacity to address IAS threats, and incorporate experience and lessons learned into Seychelles IAS management, laws and policies.

Finally, Seychelles image as an eco destination should benefit from visibility and the sensitisation of tourists to the Vallée de Mai WHS in Praslin, which is the most visited natural site in the Seychelles.

The project will be monitored by the Delegation of the European Union based in Mauritius, responsible for the Seychelles, Mauritius and Comoros.

Background

The project was selected by the European Commission in July 2010 under the EU ENRTP call for proposal Europeaid/128320 launched in 2009. Lot 6: land biodiversity in non ENPI countries-invasive species opened to 57 SIDS and overseas territories.

The European Union through the ENRTP programme (Environment and sustainable management of Natural Resources), aims to help developing countries and partner organisations address environmental and natural resource management issues and meet their obligations under Multi-lateral Agreements, and to take international policy leadership.

The holder and implementing body of the project, the 'Seychelles Islands Foundation', was established by presidential decree in 1979 as a public trust to manage and conserve the natural life of the group of islands comprising the atoll of Aldabra and initiate and instigate scientific research.

SIF was the first nature conservation body legally created in Seychelles outside usual Government set up and has the mandate to manage and protect Seychelles two WHS Aldabra Atoll and Vallée de Mai on Praslin, which were inscribed on UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site list in 1982 and 1983 respectively.

Seychelles is signatory to the World Heritage Convention as well as the international Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD; 1992). The CBD states notably that the second worst threat to the existence of biodiversity is the biological invasion of exotic species. The country has developed good environmental policy frameworks (e.g. EMPS, National Strategy for Plant Conservation) and benefits from an ongoing UNDP project in biosecurity.

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