

Islands Declaration on Climate Change

Reunion Island, 25th June 2014

We, undersigned, heads of state, government representatives, regional authorities, meeting in Reunion Island from 24th to 26th June for the International Climate-Energy Conference 'Islands and climate change : Opportunities, Resilience, Adaptation',

Aware of our extreme vulnerability to climate change, due to our insular nature and being the first to feel its impact and due to the combined effects of the globalisation of socio-economic exchanges and the increase in environmental crises ;

Concerned that climate change can compromise the conservation of our unique natural heritage, with its natural ecosystems and exceptional biodiversity, which are essential to the resilience of our islands in the face of the risk of disasters and the threats to our livelihood ;

Concerned by our lack of capacity and of the resources necessary for us to face up to climate changes, extreme phenomena, population movements and possible reconstruction of our territories ;

Preoccupied by the conclusions of the 5th report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which has confirmed the increase in temperatures and the rise in sea-level by the year 2100, essentially due to human activity ;

Determined to take charge of our own destiny and assure the future of our populations and economies, more specifically through food security and sanitation, access to water resources and reduction of poverty ;

Committed to setting up a dialogue with the civil society and populations, in the context of a bottom-up process which entails the positive involvement of each country and the acceptance by its citizens of future ways of life, as well as the application of concrete solutions to be applied within the context of sustainable development ;

Committed, in the context of the Indian Ocean, to the application of policies of resilience and adaptation of our territories within a collaborative and effective structure through, for example, the Acclimate project set up by the Indian Ocean Commission, which has made it possible to define a strategy for specific adaptation in this geographic zone, and, on the global level, through the Declaration made by the World Tourist Organisation entitled 'Sustainable Tourism in Islands', issued in Reunion in October 2013 ;

Committed to developing tools for managing natural hazards, tools aimed at the sustainable development of our territories, through the regional SEAS OI pole of excellence, in the field of satellite imagery ;

Committed to setting up and reinforcing public policies enabling an environmental and energy transition towards sustainable development, contributing to the promotion of efficient energy

use and the development of renewable energy sources, through the setting up of a regional platform or 'energy Hub', to encourage exchange of skills and technologies and having an educational aim and through promoting the development of common projects likely to obtain funding from the private sector ;

Committed to strengthening partnerships and cooperation on an international and regional scale, including those involving the small developing island states and other islands, including the European outermost territories and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs);

Committed to promote territorial cooperation at all government levels (local-subnational-national) and geographically (North-South, South-South) to exchange best practice and foster greater co-operation in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Sharing knowledge and expertise on these issues allows for greater harmonisation across boundaries and enables the use of successful solutions by all. As the key delivery agents for change, sub-national governments play an essential role in the creation, implementation and effectiveness of climate actions

Emphasising the importance of international negotiations on the subject of climate change and the urgent need to reach an ambitious agreement at the 21st Conference of the COP21 parties in Paris in 2015 – the 2015 Paris Climate conference – which aims to reduce the average increase in temperatures to below 2°C.

Willing to contribute to the efforts made on the international level to combat climate change and more specifically to contribute to preparing the agreement expected to be reached by the COP21, aimed at making the Paris Climate Conference a success ;

Willing to join the SIDS LIGHTHOUSE initiative in association with IRENA which will be represented at the Summit of the Leaders on the climate invited by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in September in New York;

Recognising that the measures of mitigation and adaptation, adopted on a local level, are essential to the sustainable development of islands, through the development of new means of production and consumption, the setting up of a green economy, the development of transport systems, the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems which, through their contribution, support communities in their efforts to adapt and contribute to their livelihoods, with particular attention being paid to the conservation and sustainable management of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Recognizing that the island Territories must develop the concept of green and blue economy, based on a rational management of natural resources and sustainable management of ecosystems in relation to our cultural and economic identity;

Recognising that a mobilisation of all the players, States, local government bodies, the private sector and the community as a whole, is essential at all levels ;

Recognizing the importance of cooperation and international and regional solidarity on these issues of climate change and energy,

Request that islands and island states are given priority for the post-2015 international climate agenda and that they may benefit from important efforts made by the international community to support the commitment of our territories and their citizens in their environmental and energy transition. Due to our position as vulnerable territories, we request easy access to the set of instruments and support structures, both financial and institutional, enabling the application of policies aimed at sustainable development and at improving the resilience of our territories to the effects of climate change ;

Request more specifically that nations, international organisations and intergovernmental bodies set up partnerships and multinational projects based on existing or newly-formed mechanisms, with a view to reinforcing and supporting local climate actions which will be resilient, efficient and involving low carbon emissions, as well as creating a specific space for government stakeholders of small developing island states, within the governance of the various structures responsible for setting up instruments resulting from multilateral negotiations ;

Welcome the WIOCC, the regional challenge for climate change in the Indian Ocean, and the global partnership for the Islands (GLISPA), the Indian Ocean Commission and the European Union for their support for such an initiative;

Encourage nations, development banks, public financing structures, private funds and alternative financing mechanisms to reinforce their support for local climate actions, to improve access of island states to this type of funding, to support local innovative projects in the field of funding for climate change, to allocate funds to long-term sustainable projects, aimed at low carbon emissions, and resilient to climate change ;

Welcome the acceptance by the "Club de Paris" of the "debt - for-adaptation swap" project proposed by the Seychelles to protect an important part of their EEZ, a coastal conservation and better management of marine resources in exchange for a reduction of their debt.

Ask nations to develop funding mechanisms enabling direct support for climate actions and sustainable development, within the framework of global funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Fund for Adaptation, the World Environment Fund, the World Bank and other instruments of international cooperation ;

Confirm, in a resolute manner, to the international community, that we consider ourselves as 'sentinels of climate change', through our contribution to the development of tools and indicators aimed at measuring vulnerability, more particularly through the setting up of an index of vulnerability which will make it possible to prioritise actions to be carried out by the international community, in order to ensure that the question of climate change, so crucial to humanity and to our nations, remains a priority on the international agenda and that of the United Nations.