

NetBiome-CSA

Strengthening European research cooperation for smart and sustainable management of tropical and subtropical biodiversity in Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)

PRESS RELEASE:

“An international conference for boosting sustainable development in Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) of the European Union (EU)”

Gran Canaria, 23rd of May 2014.

The Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands (PLOCAN) will host next Tuesday 27th of May the first international conference organised by the NetBiome-CSA project, which is funded by the European Union (EU), Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) 2007– 2013.

With the title “Boosting sustainable development from high biodiversity: Prospects for green and blue growth in ORs and OCTs”, this event represents the first of a series of milestones and international meetings planned within the context of the NetBiome-CSA project.

“The International Conference will be an excellent opportunity for stakeholders to present and discuss their ideas on topics related to biodiversity conservation and valorisation in European overseas” (José Azevedo, NetBiome-CSA Project Coordinator).

The main goal of the event is to provide an overview of the prospects for green and blue development in ORs and OCTs based on the high biodiversity of these tropical and subtropical European entities. In this sense, the project has a two-fold purpose: i) conserve the high biodiversity for future generations; and ii) ensure biodiversity becomes an added-value asset for sustainable development.

The specific objectives of the conference are to:

1. Present the NetBiome-CSA project to participants as well as its progress to date;
2. Present case studies on the socio-economic valuation of biodiversity in ORs and OCTs;
3. Present and discuss the most pressing challenges to biodiversity conservation and management in ORs and OCTs identified through an iterative exercise with a wide stakeholder base;
4. Create multidisciplinary workgroups focused on addressing those challenges;
5. Obtain guidance from international experts on innovative ideas for boosting sustainable development derived from high biodiversity.

This conference will take place only five days after the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity (22nd of May), which this year was precisely devoted to island biodiversity. Around 50 participants are expected, representing a wide range of entities related to tropical and subtropical biodiversity and covering all the levels of the quadruple helix (knowledge institutions, enterprises, government and civil society). Geographically, participants originate from 7 regions, 6 countries of the EU and two non EU countries. Several European ORs and OCTs will be represented, namely New Caledonia, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Reunion, the Netherlands Antilles, Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands. Countries



represented include Portugal, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Cape Verde and Barbados.

BACKGROUND:

The EU overseas entities are well-known areas of high terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity. They support unique ecosystems that are home to an estimated one-third of the globally threatened species, including many endemic species. While ecotourism and fisheries activities illustrate an example of the critical role of biodiversity in supporting sustainable development in these regions, the EU appreciates the importance of upholding access to maintained fisheries grounds, marine and terrestrial genetic resources, mineral exploration and a foothold in the high seas in three oceans. However, diverse direct human pressures, natural hazards and/or climate change contribute to the progressing decline of this extraordinarily rich biodiversity.

NetBiome-CSA originates from a previous biodiversity research partnership based on ORs and OCTs (the Net-Biome ERA-NET), which was focused on financing high quality research. The project takes on the challenge of mobilizing further stakeholders at all the levels of the quadruple helix in order to identify, and then to address, perceived priority challenges. The aim is to conciliate conservation and sustainable management of tropical biodiversity with the sustainable development of Europe's regions and territories, based on the benefits from high biodiversity. In doing so, and always maintaining a bottom-up approach, NetBiome-CSA will facilitate improved knowledge transfer and uptake, provide appropriate tools and models to manage information and data for policy makers and raise awareness of natural resources –including raw materials– in EU overseas in the long term.