

Submitted by France

***Presentation***

***by Ms. Madeleine de Grandmaison,  
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***of***

***the project of a Sanctuary for marine mammals  
in the French West Indies***

**A FRENCH INITIATIVE FOR  
A WHALE SANCTUARY  
IN CARIBBEAN FRENCH MARITIME SPACE**

▪ Ladies and Gentlemen,

**I** have the honor to inform you of the recent initiative of the French Government to create a sanctuary for marine mammals in the French West Indies

The idea of creating a sanctuary in the French West Indies is in line with the following directions and modalities:

The area covered by this initiative includes the Exclusive Economic Zone of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint Martin and Saint Bartholomew. The sanctuary aims at ensuring the required protection for cetaceans living in the whole area, which means that human activities carried out in this area will have to comply with this objective. This also means that we will have to take stock of all knowledge available on cetaceans in the area as well as of the major threats. This work has already achieved significant progress, but it must be subject to a consolidated document. In addition, inside this vast area, it will undoubtedly be necessary to determine vital zones for the conservation of the species concerned (for example the breeding areas or post-calving areas) where more stringent protection measures will have to be considered.

I remind you that all the French waters in this area host at least twenty whale species (humpback whales, sperm whales, fin whales, Bryde's whales, Rudolph dolphins and minke whales) as well as small cetaceans (bottlenose dolphins, spinner dolphins, pilot whales). Some of these species are sedentary, others are breeding in our waters. Unfortunately, the Manatee has disappeared, but a sanctuary may help to restore the habitat of these species, and ensure the success of a possible natural or man-induced return, as it is

hoped for by some people in our islands. Lastly, let us not lose sight of the fact that the sanctuary will ensure not only the conservation of marine mammals, but of the ecosystem as a whole, including sea turtles which are so present in the Caribbean sea.

The plan of a sanctuary in the French West Indies is based upon very broad consultations with all competent bodies in the area and all concerned stakeholders, including the users: administrations, representatives of ministries in charge of fisheries, industry, equipment, transport, tourism, elected officials, and representatives of the fishing industry, tourist industries, maritime companies, scientists and NGOs .

**This initiative by France** is in the line of its action in favor of the protection of whales

- at global level:

Through the French proposal for a sanctuary in the Antarctic, its support for all the initiatives in favor of conservation within the framework of IWC;

- in the Mediterranean, through the creation of a sanctuary with Italy and Monaco;

- and in its waters, by the creation of sanctuaries in New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

The French West Indies sanctuary will thus be the fourth initiative concerning French waters.

It was indeed high time for France to take measures in the Caribbean region, where pressure is increasing on ecosystems in general, and on the existence of cetaceans in particular. By taking this initiative, France seeks to meet a long-standing aspiration expressed by associations acting for conservation of nature, as well as by certain leaders including those of Martinique, to provide for a genuine management of the stocks in the Caribbean basin, and to integrate those resources into the economy for the sustainable development of the islands.

## A Meaningful and Visible initiative.

### Which context for this initiative?

**In an insular context, and a world economic context in crisis.**

These last four decades have witnessed the decline of plantation economy from one island to another; and all these last years, pressure exerted by globalization, and the deregulation of WTO in particular, in the case of agricultural products, has hastened the destabilization of export crops in these islands: sugar cane, banana, and even flowers. Today, the Caribbean Islands are increasingly turning towards tourism, a tourism based on their natural and cultural resources, and on their marine environment.

There is a growing need for building an attractive, harmonious and marine environment-friendly tourist sector.

**Ecotourism, both in land and in marine environment**, must be, and is becoming, the rule. Whale watching can become a leading product, shared by all Caribbean waterside economies (this activity is already practiced in Saint Lucia, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Saint Martin, Saint Bartholomew, Santo Domingo, the Virgin Islands, etc.), and could practically extend to the whole Caribbean region.

This French initiative, which is in agreement with the will of protection associations, the elected officials in the French islands, but also from other islands, is a recognition of the work achieved throughout several years by a number of people (through **E.C.C.E.A., the Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness**, a project initiated by Lesley Sully), including myself. It is the recognition of the wishes of the elected officials, namely the Regional Council of Martinique which, in regard of the conservation of the species and Caribbean milieus, has been constantly faithful to its belief that implementing a sustainable development policy is the sole alternative for our islands.

In my capacity as an official who has been successively in charge of Culture, Environment, and today Tourism within the Regional Council of Martinique, I took

advantage, together with him, of all the opportunities to develop a culture of conservation and protection of our cultural and natural resources among our people.

In my capacity as an elected official, and as part of my work within associations I:

- supported the Antarctic sanctuary (1992),
- prepared the Rio – *Earth Summit*,
- alerted the population on the dangers incurred by whales in our waters,
- attended the Monaco IWC meeting (1998) and have been all ears for the other sessions.

Today, associations, elected officials, civilians, we are all together requested to go even further. We all count on the French initiative.

**Protecting spaces and species represents a major scientific and economic stake for our island and more generally for the Caribbean space.**

In addition to physical vulnerability with respect to natural disasters, such as cyclones, climate uncertainty, volcanic activities, earthquakes, our region is also facing **structural disadvantages**:

- Insularity, tiny territories,
- Narrow markets.
- Extreme remoteness of the mother country,
- Extreme compartmentalization,
- Linguistic, political, legislative barriers.
- Globalization with all its perverse effects
- Deregulation of international trade
- Pressure from the multinationals which exploit the vulnerable economies of these islands, and exercise absolute plundering of the last remaining resources.

For all these reasons, it is necessary:

- To protect the natural and cultural resources of our islands and more particularly marine resources
- To establish a sound stock management
- To protect species and their habitats. This is indeed the reason behind the creation of a sanctuary which, in addition, can act as a federating factor for the peoples of the Caribbean basin within the framework of a fully-understood regional scientific and economic cooperation, which can go as far as the implementation of a multiple-destination type of tourism.

### **Do we have the tools for protection?**

*The legal framework exists:*

- the Carthage Convention and its SPAW protocol of which France is signatory as are many other Caribbean countries.
- the ongoing development of an action plan for marine mammals of the Caribbean.
- the United Nations Environment Program for the Caribbean region, the Caribbean Sea, a regional sea (UNEP).

In the long run, the Natural Marine Park tool, which has been just approved by the French Parliament, and which now allows us to adopt measures of conservation of marine species and habitats throughout our entire Exclusive Economic Zone, could become the most appropriate regulatory framework

***Political good will exists, at national, international and regional levels***

***Citizens will also exists through the unanimous voice of associations in favor of the conservation of nature.***

The International Whaling Commission has long been interested in the creation of sanctuaries ; and although the creation of new sanctuaries is now difficult within this body, we thought it would be useful to inform you about our initiative and to extend an invitation to IWC member countries in this region, just as we intend to do it within the Carthagena Convention, to join us in this thinking and this project.

We will never repeat enough that the stake of protection and recommended sustainable use is: knowledge, biodiversity protection, development of the islands, to guarantee a decent living for their population.

Ten years ago already, I had rung the alarm bell together with others when I said that:  
" For us, Caribbean Islands in general, and French-speaking Islands in particular,  
We are faced with two choices:

With respect to the use of our natural resources and in order to meet our development needs.

**1. Either we are satisfied with interests**

Interests means integration of these resources into development of tourism, in the line of what Australia has been doing for its coral reefs, the Bahamas for its sea-beds, Santo Domingo for its marine parks.

**2. Or we waste away capital** by squandering stocks and offering them as a prey to international appetites around us ; such a choice means that it is ruin which awaits us.  
**These two choices are incompatible .**

We are accountable for the future of our children and for this reason we should keep in mind that the Caribbean Sea, our forests, our rivers, represent our past, our present and our future. Once we understand that, we will seek and find the right path to development."

I would like to assure you that around this Caribbean basin, there are other leaders apart from those who have a short-term view of development. In addition to English-speaking, Spanish-speaking leaders, there are also French-speaking leaders acting for sustainable development who have concern for the interests of the future generations and who appeal to this:

**this whale sanctuary.**

The French West Indies sanctuary which I hope one day will become the sanctuary of the West Indies is a excellent initiative for the conservation of cetaceans and other marine mammals. But it is also a excellent initiative, because it can cater, within the same project, both for the need of conservation of nature and the concern for economic development.

Madeleine de Grandmaison  
Fort de France, June 12, 2006

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