

Project to save reefs from climate change launched

Nature Seychelles (BirdLife Partner) have launched an innovative project to restore damaged corals in Seychelles called *Reef Rescuers - Restoring Coral Reefs in the Face of Climate Change* at its office the Centre for Environment and Education in Roche Caiman in the presence of Seychelles Minister for Investment, Natural Resources & Industry, Peter Sinon, US Ambassador to the Seychelles Mary Jo Wills, partners from government and the civil society, and other guests. Coral reefs are extremely important for Seychelles, providing food, coastal protection, revenue and employment in the fishing and the tourism sectors. However, coral reefs in Seychelles and the Indian Ocean have suffered from climate-induced effects causing them to whiten and die. The project seeks to repair this damage in selected sites. The project is financially supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and is part of the United States strategic global commitments to partner with governments, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders to address the impacts of climate change. "The United States is actively engaged in the mitigation of climate change. President Obama announced in Copenhagen that the US would provide funds to developing countries to assist them in meeting climate change mitigation goals", said Ambassador Wills. "We also believe that a historic opportunity is at hand in the Indian ocean, with Nature Seychelles, to make positive and lasting changes in the way we manage, restore and rescue our reef resources including fisheries resources and coral reefs upon which fisheries depend", she added. Corals of a variety of species will be grown and then planted on selected sites. Whilst growing, they will be protected from predators and other disturbances. The project will also bring in participants from Seychelles and several countries of the region. "Over the past years people just kept on talking about coral bleaching. We decided to do something about it and use our skills and experience in restoring ecosystems on land and in saving rare birds and do the same under the sea?", said Nirmal Shah, Nature Seychelles Chief Executive. Minister Sinon hailed the project saying there is great and immediate need to seriously consider climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. "Whilst our reefs continue to act as our first line of defence from rising ocean levels that threaten to erode our shores, they remain the most important habitats and spawning grounds for our main protein and daily diet - our fish supply," he concluded. **Photo: Ambassador Wills and Nirmal Shah after signing the grant agreement**