



# Giving Back <sup>to the</sup> People of the **Philippines**

**SEACOLOGY** salutes President Gloria Arroyo of the Republic of the Philippines who took the unprecedented initiative to declare the month of June annually as the 'Celebrate the Sea' month and every 2nd Saturday in June will be the 'Celebrate the Sea' Day.



Seacology, an NGO with the sole purpose of preserving the environment of islands throughout the globe, believes this initiative deserves our support. We have initiated a plan where Seacology and Ocean Geographic readers, can breathe life to this wonderful proclamation.

The Philippines has many beautiful islands. Among them is Palawan. The late Jacques Cousteau described Palawan as one of the most beautiful seascapes in the world. The terrain is so stunning that Palawan was the chosen location for the 1997 James Bond thriller "Tomorrow Never Dies." Palawan is home to 323 species of wildlife and has been given the title "Haven of Philippines Wildlife." The undersea scenery is equally spectacular as the waters off Palawan are home to nearly 11,000 square kilometers of coral reefs. The Philippines has some of the world's most diverse coral reefs, featuring far more species than in other parts of the world. But there are troubles in paradise. Philippines is also home to some of the world's most damaged reefs with 85% of Philippines reefs negatively impacted

by blast and cyanide fishing, over fishing and pollution. The reefs of Palawan were not spared.

Seacology's modus operandi offers local stakeholders tangible benefits in exchange for an agreement to preserve threatened marine or forest ecosystems. We approached the villages of Sibaltan, New Ibajay, Mabini and Villa Paz near the city of El Nido on Palawan Island and offered Seacology's resources to help them preserve their threatened reefs and mangrove forests. In their response they requested funding for two guardhouses, patrol boats, marker buoys and signs to enforce a new *no-fishing reserve* on 470 acres of coral reef and an additional *no logging zone* on 2,410 acres of mangrove forest. As this will affect the villagers' income, they

requested funding for machinery to shell and roast in their fledgling but sustainable cashew farming industry. The total cost of the guardhouses, boats, signage, machinery and the new marine and mangrove reserves amounts to US\$33,000. This is a particularly important project as the reefs of the newly created *no-fishing reserve* are home to dugongs, a sea mammal which is vulnerable to extinction. These reefs are also nesting grounds for the Green, Hawksbill and Olive Ridley turtles.

The publishers of the book '50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth' was so thrilled

with this project that they adopted it as one of the 50 most effective things people can do to save the earth. Readers of that book and

**The undersea scenery is equally spectacular as the waters off Palawan are home to nearly 11,000 square kilometers of coral reefs.**

Ocean Geographic can help make this project a reality. It will indeed be a redeeming and proud moment to announce this project at the 2009 Celebrate the Sea Festival, as an international effort to help preserve the coral reefs while improving the quality of life for the people of Palawan. We invite

you to be part of this global effort. Visit the Seacology website at [www.seacology.org](http://www.seacology.org) and click on the 50 Simple Things navigation bar on our home page. All your donations will go to this project without administrative costs to Seacology. ○