SPEAKING POINTS: Mr Chair, thank you

In GRL, the government has as an explicit legal requirement to listen both to scientists and community member's knowledge about biodiversity when making decisions on quotas and natural resource management. Before the EU BEST project, we did not have a suitable mechanism in place to allow for the incorporation of community knowledge into government decision-making at scale. I know that our project PISUNA has already been presented earlier today and wish to thank you for this opportunity to share our experiences.

In GRL, there are few if any locally-based environmental NGOs, so the involvement of the Government in the EU BEST project PISUNA has enabled the project investment to be much more likely to be sustained beyond the lifetime of the project. This however also makes the application-process difficult for some of the calls. We find we have wasted time on unclear rules for who could apply and who could not apply.

We have the impression that the staff of EU BEST were strong in natural science but less strong in 'real' world' implementation of sustainable conservation efforts. Here we think of community based natural resource management, social science and interdisciplinary approaches. More involvement of those skills would improve the project selection process and, ultimately, the long term impact of the investments made, we think.

In our day to day implementation of the project, we however have been fortunate to have project managers in Bruxelles who were very professional and thorough in their work.

We find that it is fundamental that ecosystem profiles development should be seen as a process, so you involve those that are going to use the profiles in the development of the profiles. It is also worth remembering that each Outermost Region / Overseas Countries Territories already have policy documents on the environment.

Concerning the regional investment strategies, there is a risk that the regional investment strategies are based on proposals that do not have a broader constituency behind them. For instance in GRL, the Government did not have staff resources to propose investment ideas within the deadline provided. The investment strategies therefore, may sometimes be based largely on proposals made by individual scientists and do not necessarily reflect an interdisciplinary approach that could enable true integration of conservation with local development. For example, surveys of threatened species can be important but they do not in itself lead to conservation and sustainable management of the species' population. Likewise, nature protection investments that do not take into consideration the livelihoods of the local people living in the areas are unlikely to be successful and sustained. We need to learn from the experiences that EU BEST has had – some project approaches have proved to be successful.

The EU BEST funds have provided very important seed-funding for activities that otherwise would not have happened. We suggest that some of the funds are earmarked for scaling up approaches or initiatives that during the previous funding rounds have shown to be particularly innovative and successful