

## Presentation of Mr. Pascual Prota at NOAA

To have the opportunity of being here in this Institution of knowledge and science is for us a great honor, one that we really value.

I will conduct this short intervention in English, because I count on your understanding and kind patience, and also because if I get stuck along the way, and this is my Plan B, I can always ask for help to Gustavo Goni or Nelson Melo.

I want to begin this presentation by giving you some facts about the Hispaniola Island and specifically about the Dominican Republic, facts you probably already know, but are always helpful to remember.

The Hispaniola is the second biggest island in the Great Caribbean, second only to Cuba, but by far the most populated.

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two thirds of the island, with an area of 48,442 square kilometers. Haiti occupies the western part, with an area of 27,750 square kilometers.

The population density of the Hispaniola Island is high, at 255 people per square kilometer. The USA has 33 people per square kilometer.

Because 60% of the population is poor, or very poor, it is obvious that the island's natural resources, land and sea, are under heavy pressure and the future of next generations of Dominicans and Haitians depend on what we do today in order to preserve these resources. In the case of Haiti, regeneration of their natural resources is the only possible way. Haiti is a failed State, as declared several decades ago by United Nations and what is happening in Haiti in terms of human suffering and ecological disaster is a tragedy that eventually, sooner than later, will affect not only the Dominican Republic but also the whole region.

The Dominican Republic has 3 mayor mountain chains: The Septentrional chain, the Central chain and the Sierra de Bahoruco chain. The three highest mountains of the Caribbean are located in the Dominican Republic, with altitudes over 3,000 meters. The island also has the lowest point in the Caribbean, about 79 meters below sea level (Enriquillo Lake).

The hidrography of the Dominican Republic is vast, considering the fact that it is an island with 29 rivers and several lakes occupying 1.7 percent of the total surface of the country.

We have 4 important bays: Manzanillo, Samaná, Ocoa, Neyba and Calderas. Also, I like to highlight the coral banks in the north, Plata and Navidad, which are part of the Marine Mammals Sanctuary where over 3,000 Humpback Whales visit every winter to mate and reproduce, making North Atlantic whales Dominican goodwill ambassadors.

Regardless of our privileged position in the center of the continent, the Dominican Republic has a long tradition of ignoring its geographical reality. We have no fishing industry and seafood is not an important part of the Dominican diet. We do not have a merchant fleet, very few marine facilities, sail and recreational boats and other marine sports are not popular. In few words we live with our back to the sea.

Most Dominicans do not realize that we have more territory below sea level than above sea level. The Dominican Republic is 48,442 Km<sup>2</sup> and our Economic Exclusive Zone is over 300,000 Km<sup>2</sup>, this leads us to the easy conclusion that most of our own resources are in the water, sea bed and under the sea bed. To increase the awareness of the Dominicans about how important our marine resources and how important they will be in the 21 century is part of our job in ANAMAR. To know our marine resources, to properly protect them and use them in a sustainable way, is a challenge that we have to face as a nation.

The Climate Change will impact us in many ways and for that reason our government is creating new institutions with the capabilities of managing its effects wisely. ANAMAR is one of these institutions.

I want to end these words leaving no doubts behind that ANAMAR is fully committed to be an a Authority with technical and scientific capabilities, fit to interact globally as a serious partner, with other agencies like NOAA. We know that this is not an easy enterprise especially in a country like ours, with financial limitations and no tradition in scientific research. To overcome those obstacles is our greatest challenge!

Thank you again for your invitation which I hope will mark the beginning of a long lasting and productive relationship between NOAA and ANAMAR.

Miami, Florida, September 28, 2010.