

abroad, other factors are also critical to how the United States is viewed around the world. An important point of regaining our rightful leadership role is to find more effective ways to let the world know who we are as Americans and what we stand for.

One of the most effective elements of American public policy is the array of libraries and information resource centers around the globe. The facilities run by our State Department provide people in foreign countries the ability to freely access information about the United States, about their own societies, and about science and the arts. For years, these resources have been a testament to the principle that the greatest tool we have against tyranny is the truth.

But as we face this moment of tighter budgets, I am afraid that our public diplomacy libraries and resource centers are not getting the support they need.

That is why I have introduced this bill. The bill would not seek to disrupt the efforts that the State Department has under way to organize and run its resource centers. Rather, it would seek to put these efforts on a more stable footing by creating a clear funding stream for the State Department libraries and resource centers abroad.

Furthermore, the bill would establish the Johnny Grant film series as part of the State Department's public diplomacy effort. Johnny Grant is a legendary friend of American entertainment and is known as the honorary mayor of Hollywood for his continued efforts on behalf of the American entertainment industries. He is also an ardent proponent of the power of American film to convey the universal values of freedom and opportunity to others around the world. As of this year, he will have made his 60th trip abroad to entertain our troops.

□ 1645

By the way, he traveled with Bob Hope often. The Johnny Grant Film Series would provide the United States Government with the opportunity to show the world the optimism and promise of America as portrayed in our classic films.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank both my chairman, TOM LANTOS, as well as my cosponsor, the ranking member, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for their extraordinary efforts to help me move this legislation forward. I would also like to specifically thank David Abramowitz and Lynne Weil of the majority staff, and Doug Anderson and Sam Stratman of the Republican staff for the kind consideration they showed to me and my staff as we sought to move this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2553, the Public Diplomacy Resource Centers Act of 2007. Every year, thou-

sands of people living overseas visit an American Cultural Center or one of dozens of American Corners that are maintained by our State Department. Those libraries and cultural outposts are indispensable tools in our public diplomacy efforts around the world. They help foreign audiences better understand our Nation, our people, our government, and our society.

The bill before us today will strengthen this American outreach by establishing a new film series and by requiring a report to Congress analyzing the effectiveness of libraries and resource centers. Also, by providing specific statutory authority for the establishment and maintenance of these centers, this bill will create an annual appropriations line item, which will allow Congress to oversee these activities in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California, my good friend, Ambassador WATSON, and the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my good friend, Representative ROS-LEHTINEN, for introducing this measure, which deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2553, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION ACT OF 1998 AMENDMENTS

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2185) to amend the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 to provide debt relief to developing countries that take action to protect forests and coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems, to reauthorize such Act through fiscal year 2010, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2185

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Subsection (a) of section 802 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431) is amended—

(1) in paragraphs (1), (6), and (7), by striking “tropical forests” each place it appears and inserting “tropical forests and coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems”;

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (3) through (7) as paragraphs (4) through (8), respectively;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) Coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems provide a wide range of benefits to mankind by—

“(A) harboring more species per unit area than any other marine habitat, providing the basis for developing pharmaceutical products and fostering a growing marine tourism sector;

“(B) providing a major source of food and jobs for hundreds of millions of coastal residents; and

“(C) serving as natural storm barriers, thus protecting vulnerable shorelines and communities from storm waves and erosion.”; and

(4) in paragraph (4) (as redesignated)—

(A) by inserting “and coral reef and associated coastal marine ecosystems” after “forest resources”; and

(B) by inserting “and coral reef and associated coastal marine ecosystem exploitation” after “tropical deforestation”.

(b) PURPOSES.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) in paragraphs (1), (3), and (4), by striking “tropical forests” each place it appears and inserting “tropical forests and coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems”; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking “tropical forests” the first and third place it appears and inserting “tropical forests and coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems”; and

(B) by striking “tropical forests” the second place it appears and inserting “areas”; and

(C) by inserting at the end before the semicolon the following: “and unsustainable coral reef and associated coastal marine ecosystem exploitation”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

Section 803 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431a) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2)(A), by striking “Committee on International Relations” and inserting “Committee on Foreign Affairs”; and

(2) by striking paragraphs (4), (7), (8), and (9);

(3) in paragraph (5)—

(A) in the heading, by striking “TROPICAL FOREST” and inserting “TROPICAL FOREST OR CORAL REEF OR ASSOCIATED COASTAL MARINE ECOSYSTEM”;

(B) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “tropical forest” and inserting “tropical forest or coral reef or associated coastal marine ecosystem”; and

(C) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) by striking “tropical forest” and inserting “tropical forest or coral reef or associated coastal marine ecosystem”; and

(ii) by striking “tropical forests” and inserting “tropical forests or coral reefs or associated coastal marine ecosystems”;

(4) by redesignating paragraphs (5) and (6) as paragraphs (9) and (10), respectively; and

(5) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:

“(4) CONSERVATION AGREEMENT.—The term ‘Conservation Agreement’ or ‘Agreement’ means a Conservation Agreement provided for in section 809.

“(5) CONSERVATION FACILITY.—The term ‘Conservation Facility’ or ‘Facility’ means the Conservation Facility established in the Department of the Treasury by section 804.

“(6) CONSERVATION FUND.—The term ‘Conservation Fund’ or ‘Fund’ means a Conservation Fund provided for in section 810.

“(7) CORAL.—The term ‘coral’ means species of the phylum Cnidaria, including—

“(A) all species of the orders Antipatharia (black corals), Scleractinia (stony corals), Alcyonacea (soft corals), Gorgonacea (horny corals), Stolonifera (organpipe corals and

others), and Coenothecalia (blue coral), of the class Anthozoa; and

“(B) all species of the order Hydrocorallina (fire corals and hydrocorals) of the class Hydrozoa.

“(8) CORAL REEF.—The term ‘coral reef’ means any reef or shoal composed primarily of corals.”.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FACILITY.

Section 804 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431b) is amended by striking “Tropical Forest Facility” and inserting “Conservation Facility”.

SEC. 4. ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS.

Section 805(a) of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431c(a)) is amended by striking “tropical forest” and inserting “tropical forest or coral reef or associated coastal marine ecosystem”.

SEC. 5. REDUCTION OF DEBT OWED TO THE UNITED STATES AS A RESULT OF CONCESSIONAL LOANS UNDER THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961.

(a) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—Subsection (c)(2) of section 806 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431d) is amended by striking “Tropical Forest Fund” and inserting “Conservation Fund”.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Subsection (d)(6) of such section is amended by striking “fiscal year 2007” and inserting “each of the fiscal years 2007 through 2010”.

(c) USE OF FUNDS TO CONDUCT PROGRAM AUDITS, EVALUATIONS, MONITORING, AND ADMINISTRATION.—Subsection (e) of such section is amended to read as follows:

“(e) USE OF FUNDS TO CONDUCT PROGRAM AUDITS, EVALUATIONS, MONITORING, AND ADMINISTRATION.—Of the amounts made available to carry out this part for a fiscal year, up to \$300,000 is authorized to be made available to carry out audits, evaluations, monitoring, and administration of programs under this part, including personnel costs associated with such audits, evaluations, monitoring, and administration.”

SEC. 6. REDUCTION OF DEBT OWED TO THE UNITED STATES AS A RESULT OF CREDITS EXTENDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE AGRICULTURAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1954.

Section 807(c)(2) of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431e(c)(2)) is amended by striking “Tropical Forest Fund” and inserting “Conservation Fund”.

SEC. 7. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION ON OVERSIGHT BODIES FOR GRANTS FROM DEBT-FOR-NATURE SWAPS AND DEBT-BUYBACKS.

Section 808(a)(5) of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431f(a)(5)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(C) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION ON THE ADMINISTERING BODY.—One or more individuals appointed by the United States Government may serve in an official capacity on the administering body that oversees the implementation of grants arising from this debt-for-nature swap or debt buy-back regardless of whether the United States is a party to any agreement between the eligible purchaser and the government of the beneficiary country.”.

SEC. 8. CONSERVATION AGREEMENT.

(a) AUTHORITY.—Subsection (a) of section 809 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431g) is amended—

(1) by striking “(a) AUTHORITY.—” and all that follows through “The Secretary of State” and inserting “(a) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of State”;

(2) by striking “Tropical Forest Agreement” and inserting “Conservation Agreement”;

(3) by striking paragraph (2).

(b) ADMINISTERING BODY.—Subsection (c)(2)(A) of such section is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by inserting at the end before the semicolon the following: “to serve in an official capacity”; and

(2) in clause (iii)(III), by inserting “or marine” after “forestry”.

(c) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “the tropical forests” and inserting “tropical forests or coral reefs or associated coastal marine ecosystems”;

(2) in paragraph (2), by inserting “and water” after “land”;

(3) in paragraph (5), by striking “tropical forest”;

(4) in paragraph (6), by striking “living in or near a tropical forest in a manner consistent with protecting such tropical forest” and inserting “dependent on a tropical forest or coral reef or associated coastal marine ecosystem in a manner consistent with protecting and conserving such resources”.

(d) GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Subsection (e)(1)(A) of such section is amended by inserting “marine,” after “forestry”.

(e) REVIEW OF LARGER GRANTS.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended to read as follows:

“(f) REVIEW OF LARGER GRANTS.—Any grant of more than \$250,000 from a Fund shall be approved by the Government of the United States and the government of the beneficiary country.”.

(f) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The heading of such section is amended by striking “TROPICAL FOREST” and inserting “CONSERVATION”.

SEC. 9. CONSERVATION FUND.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Subsection (a) of section 810 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431h) is amended—

(1) by striking “Tropical Forest Agreement” and inserting “Conservation Agreement”;

(2) by striking “Tropical Forest Fund” and inserting “Conservation Fund”.

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such section is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking “terms as conditions” and inserting “terms and conditions”;

(2) in the heading, by striking “TROPICAL FOREST” and inserting “CONSERVATION”.

SEC. 10. BOARD.

Section 811 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431i) is hereby repealed.

SEC. 11. ANNUAL REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS.

Section 813 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431k) is amended—

(1) by striking “(a) IN GENERAL.—”;

(2) by striking “December 31” and inserting “April 15”;

(3) by striking “fiscal year” each place it appears and inserting “calendar year”;

(4) by striking subsection (b).

SEC. 12. TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) PART HEADING.—The heading of part V of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 is amended by striking “TROPICAL FORESTS” and inserting “TROPICAL FORESTS OR CORAL REEFS OR ASSOCIATED COASTAL MARINE ECOSYSTEMS”.

(b) SHORT TITLE.—

(1) AMENDMENT.—Section 801 of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2151 note) is amended by striking “Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998” and inserting “Tropical Forest and Coral Conservation Act of 2007”.

(2) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, regulation, document, or other record of the

United States to the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 shall be deemed to be a reference to the Tropical Forest and Coral Conservation Act of 2007.

(3) AVAILABILITY OF UNOBLIGATED OR UNEXPENDED FUNDS.—Amounts appropriated to carry out the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 (as in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act) that are unobligated or unexpended as of the date of the enactment of this Act may be used to carry out the Tropical Forest and Coral Conservation Act of 2007.

(c) REDESIGNATION.—Part V of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2431 et seq.) is amended by redesignating sections 812 and 813 as sections 811 and 812, respectively.

(d) OTHER AMENDMENTS.—Section 703(a)(5) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2430b(a)(5)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “or, as appropriate in exceptional circumstances,” and inserting “or”;

(2) in subparagraph (A), by striking “or an arrangement under the structural adjustment facility or enhanced structural adjustment facility, or in exceptional circumstances, a Fund monitored program or its equivalent,” and inserting “an arrangement under the structural adjustment facility or enhanced structural adjustment facility, a Fund monitored program, or is implementing sound macroeconomic policies.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the Tropical Forest Conservation Act Reauthorization bill and urge my colleagues to do so as well. I would particularly like to recognize the efforts of Congressman MARK KIRK, the sponsor of H.R. 2185. Congressman KIRK is a long-time champion of this innovative debt-for-conservation program. Mr. KIRK's legislation extends and expands a vitally important environmental initiative launched during the Clinton administration.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 9 years this program has resulted in 12 Tropical Forest Conservation Act agreements in Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America. These agreements have provided \$135 million to help conserve 50 million acres of tropical forests. The Tropical Forest Conservation Act has become one of the most effective foreign policy tools that the executive branch has at its disposal to encourage developing states to take action to protect and preserve tropical forests.

The program has been a tremendous success. It has provided needed funding to actively pursue debt swaps, buybacks, and debt restructuring with developing nations in return for concrete expenditures aimed at protecting vital natural resources. This mechanism inspires more prompt debt servicing and gives foreign governments a greater sense of responsibility for preserving the global heritage.

H.R. 2185 would expand the program in a very significant way by extending its debt-relief-for-conservation mechanism to expenditures aimed at protecting coral reefs and sensitive marine environments. Coral reefs and coastal marine environments provide a host of benefits to humankind. They harbor a major share of the world's marine biological diversity, and act as vital nurseries and seeding grounds for many sensitive deep sea species. They also provide the foundation for economic, social and recreational activities of immeasurable value.

Mr. Speaker, coral reefs are extremely sensitive treasures. However, the shocking reports of wide-scale coral bleaching that has occurred around the globe in recent years should serve as a wake-up call for all of us. Urgent action is needed to mitigate the contributions that human activities are making to this problem.

H.R. 2185 provides just the kind of creative, targeted and mutually beneficial assistance that is clearly required to tackle this important ecological threat. H.R. 2185 will also enable more key countries to participate in the program. Currently, in order to qualify for the Act's mutually beneficial mechanism, a country must have an IMF agreement in place. Under the new language, eligibility would also extend to nations that are implementing sound macroeconomic policies.

Mr. Speaker, the executive branch has partnered with us in crafting this reauthorization, and has expressed its interest in seeing it pass this year. I urge my colleagues to support passage of this important measure.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill H.R. 2185, which would reauthorize and amend the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998. As the total territory of the world's tropical forests continue to decline, programs such as that created by the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 are an important component of international efforts to slow and hopefully reverse the decline at the start of the new century.

Under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, a country with a tropical forest within its borders may seek an agreement with the United States whereby some of the debts it may owe us can instead be utilized to support activities that maintain those tropical forests. The bill would reauthorize this important conservation program

through fiscal year 2010. The bill also amends the program in order to make coral reefs eligible for coverage under the program as well.

This is an important response to the increasing evidence of decline in the world coral reefs, which, along with tropical forests, are a vital environmental resource. It is important that we preserve such underwater treasures, not just for future generations to enjoy, but to ensure the sustainability of our world's fragile ecology.

Mr. Speaker, enactment of this bill would authorize a continuation of these important conservation efforts for the next 3 fiscal years. I support this measure and urge my colleagues as well to support this measure.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today in support of H.R. 2185, a resolution that I introduced with my good friend Congressman MARK KIRK and the bipartisan support of 30 other cosponsors.

I would like to first extend my appreciation for the hard work and efforts made by all parties who worked to craft this important bipartisan piece of legislation. Congressman KIRK and I worked closely with the Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, the World Wildlife Fund, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Office of Management and Budget, and Departments of State and Treasury on this bill. I thank each of these bodies for their input, cooperation and support.

This innovative program allows eligible developing countries to utilize all funds spent on tropical forest preservation toward foreign debt payments to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2185 builds on the already successful and sound economic and conservation law, the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, TFCA, of 1998.

For 7 years, the program created by that act has simultaneously accomplished two key goals: providing relief for the burden of debt on developing countries and promoting increased international tropical forest conservation.

The program's achievements speak for themselves. Since its inception, 12 "debt-for nature swaps" have been signed in developing countries in Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America, generating \$135 million in debt relief for these countries and conserving some 50 million acres of tropical forests.

Our legislation reauthorizes and expands this program.

By reauthorizing the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, the House is continuing to strengthen the indigenous economies and civil society of developing countries while protecting both the world's forests and endangered marine habitats.

Additionally, by continuing to protect our rainforests we are protecting future medicinal storehouses. The medicinal value of these rainforests cannot be underestimated. Today some 120 prescription drugs sold worldwide today are derived directly from rainforest plants. By conserving our rainforests, we are providing possible cures for life-threatening diseases.

By expanding this legislation, we are improving on an already responsible, sensible and successful initiative to conserve more ecosystems and relieve more countries' debt.

One of the most significant expansions we made to the Tropical Forest Conservation Act

in this bill extends the program to apply to all forests, coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems. Including coral reefs and related marine areas under the scope of TFCA will encourage the conservation of these endangered marine environments.

Coral reef ecosystems throughout the world face numerous threats and even possible extinction. Threats to coral reef, in turn, threaten the species and livelihoods that depend on them. Coral reef offers protections from storms, wave damage, and erosion and also provides various economic opportunities from fishing to ecotourism.

By providing incentives for developing nations to conserve their coral resources, we are in effect protecting coastal landscape's and maintaining coastal quality of water of some of the most important coral reef ecosystems in the world.

Another important alteration we made to the legislation expands the programs eligibility to additional countries. Current law forbids governments of beneficiary countries to be grant recipients unless there are "exceptional circumstances." However, for many countries their governments are the sole managers of their ecosystems, thereby preventing them from receiving the funds. By increasing the Treasury Department's authority to provide funds to governments of beneficiary countries, our legislation extends the programs' eligibility to even more developing countries.

A final significant change we made to the program authorizes additional funding for audits and evaluation and allows these funds to be used for monitoring and administration. Increasing the funding amount allows the Treasury Department to better monitor all deals and improve oversight over the entire program.

Top notch strategies and technologies needed to conserve and protect our international ecosystems can be found right here in the United States. In my State of Florida, several institutions have long been at the forefront of efforts to preserve these marine habitats.

The Florida Aquarium, a non-profit education and research institution in Tampa, has developed cutting edge technologies and protocols for coral conservation including how to safely introduce cultural coral into wild reefs. Until the museum pioneered this technology, there was no viable solution to "quickly" rebuild destroyed and dying reefs. Developing countries participating in our debt relief initiative could greatly benefit from the museum's technology and expertise, and I strongly encourage these countries to seek out the museum as a resource in their efforts to rehabilitate coral.

The Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, located outside of my district in Fort Pierce, does equally outstanding work to investigate the causes of and prevent coral reef degradation and deforestation. Dr. Brian Lapointe of the Center for Coastal Research at Harbor Branch has spent the majority of his career studying threats to the marine ecosystems in island nations such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Martinique and St. Lucia. He has successfully assisted these countries by helping them understand the effects of human impact on coral reef.

Dr. Lapointe and others at Harbor Branch Oceanographic have tirelessly worked to educate communities on rehabilitation strategies and future conservation techniques. People like Brian Lapointe and institutions like Harbor

Branch Oceanographic can help countries that get assistance through the Tropical Forest Conservation Act program to restore and protect valuable and irreplaceable coral reefs and other marine ecosystems.

This bill is a win-win-win situation. With the passage of this bill, Congress can further alleviate debt in developing countries, provide long-term sustainable financing for environmental conservation and protection for important world ecosystems, and advance medicinal research and increase United States assistance to developing countries and further our credibility overseas. Reauthorizing the Tropical Forest Conservation Act provides numerous benefits to developing nations, to the United States, and to our planet.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, as we reauthorize the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, we take an important and critical new step to help the world preserve and restore its natural resources and vital ecosystems. This reauthorization will continue our efforts to preserve the world's forests, coral reefs, and associated coastal marine ecosystems. The Tropical Forest Conservation Act will create an invaluable debt-for-nature exchange that not only benefits the global economy, but also the global environment.

Protecting our natural resources is a daunting responsibility, and coral reefs present unique challenges to protect and rebuild. They are fragile, slow-growing, and easily damaged by passing ships, changes in temperature, or severe weather. Despite these challenges, they are an integral part of our environment. Corals support economies, protect coastlines, and act as ecosystems for thousands of species of sea life. They may also provide information for the development of new drugs or understandings of human disease.

The Florida Aquarium, a non-profit education and research institution in Tampa, has extensive experience in developing cutting edge technologies and protocols for coral conservation, including how to safely introduce cultured coral onto wild reefs. This facility has pioneered the methods and technology needed to confidently direct a coral health certificate program wherein aquacultured corals are certified as safe for introduction into the wild. Until the Florida Aquarium developed this certification technique for artificially aquacultured coral, there was no acceptable solution for doing so. This made rebuilding reefs time-consuming and expensive, and often led to the destruction of the wild coral that scientists were trying to restore. Today, the Florida Aquarium continues to lead the scientific community as the only institution in the world that can certify aquacultured coral for wild reefs.

Mr. Speaker, developing countries participating in our debt relief initiative could greatly benefit from the Florida Aquarium's technology and expertise. I strongly encourage the coral initiatives under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act to seek out the Florida Aquarium as a resource in rehabilitating coral reefs world wide. I am proud to support this important legislation in its effort to preserve our natural resources.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2185, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 to provide debt relief to developing countries that take action to protect tropical forests and coral reefs and associated coastal marine ecosystems, to reauthorize such Act through fiscal year 2010, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENT RELATING TO REUNIFICATION OF CYPRUS

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 405) expressing the strong support of the House of Representatives for implementation of the July 8, 2006, United Nations-brokered agreement between President of the Republic of Cyprus Tassos Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat relating to the reunification of Cyprus, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 405

Whereas, in recognition that any future efforts for a solution of the Cyprus problem need to be carefully prepared, President of the Republic of Cyprus Tassos Papadopoulos and former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan met on February 28, 2006, in Paris, and reiterated that, "the resumption of the negotiating process within the framework of the Secretary General's Good Offices must be timely and based on careful preparation";

Whereas on July 8, 2006, President Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, agreed, under the auspices of United Nations Under Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, to a set of principles to begin a process of bi-communal discussions;

Whereas the set of principles agreed to are—

(1) commitment to the unification of Cyprus based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and political equality, as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions;

(2) recognition of the fact that the status quo is unacceptable and that its prolongation would have negative consequences for the Turkish and Greek Cypriots;

(3) commitment to the proposition that a comprehensive settlement is both desirable and possible, and should not be further delayed;

(4) agreement to begin a process immediately, involving bi-communal discussion of issues that affect the day-to-day life of the people and concurrently those that concern substantive issues, both of which will contribute to a comprehensive settlement; and

(5) commitment to ensure that the "right atmosphere" prevails for this process to be

successful; in that connection, confidence-building measures are essential, both in terms of improving the atmosphere and improving the life of all Turkish and Greek Cypriots; and also in that connection, an end must be put to the so-called "blame game";

Whereas, according to the agreement, technical committees and working groups would be set up to examine and discuss issues that affect day-to-day life of the people of Cyprus and concurrently those that concern substantive issues, thus contributing to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem;

Whereas on March 27, 2007, the United Nations Security Council in a statement on Cyprus indicated that, "the members of the Security Council urge both communities to work with the United Nations to implement the 8 July 2006 agreement, in particular through the immediate creation of bi-communal working groups and technical committees in order to prepare the ground for full-fledged negotiations leading to a comprehensive and durable settlement";

Whereas the United States has long supported fostering the reunification of Cyprus within a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, and within a process that is led by the United Nations, thereby consistent with the intended aim of the July 8, 2006, agreement, and as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas several meetings have been held between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot members of the coordination committee, consulting on the implementation of the July 8, 2006, agreement, but no technical committees or working groups have been set up;

Whereas on June 15, 2007, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1758 which "expresses full support for the July 8, 2006 process, notes with concern the lack of progress, and calls upon all parties to immediately engage constructively with the United Nations efforts, as described in Under Secretary General Gambari's letter of 15 November 2006, to demonstrate measurable progress in order to allow fully fledged negotiations to begin"; and

Whereas on September 5, 2007, President Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat "agreed on the need for the earliest start of the [Gambari] process" and to "continue their contact through the UN and to meet again when appropriate": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its support for the immediate implementation of the July 8, 2006, agreement as the way forward to prepare for new comprehensive negotiations leading to the reunification of Cyprus within a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions; and

(2) calls upon the United States Government to fully support the immediate implementation of the July 8, 2006, agreement in its entirety and without deviation from that process.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.