



Report of the Working Group on International Trade in Coral Reef Species

Presented by Barbara Best

Background

1. ICRI has long recognized the negative impacts, such as unsustainable and destructive fishing practices, that international trade in coral and coral reef species can have on coral reef ecosystems, the collectors health and the local communities that depend upon these resources. ICRI's *Call to Action* and *Renewed Call to Action* urge all parties to eliminate unsustainable fishing practices and to encourage the private sector to use and protect coral reefs and related ecosystems in ecologically sustainable ways.
2. ICRI has addressed international trade issues through measures adopted at previous meetings, including the *Resolution on Trade in Coral and Coral Reef Species* (October, 1999), *Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries* (October, 2000), and the *Decision in Support of the APEC Strategy on Destructive Fishing* (April, 2001).
3. ICRI has also encouraged partners to become active in issues before the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). This convention is an important international mechanism for regulating trade. CITES also is a way for importing countries, which are often creating the demand for products, to share the responsibility with the source countries for ensuring that trade is sustainable. For example, it was the listing of hard corals on CITES, and the inspection of required documentation by importing countries, that helped the Philippines stem the unsustainable and illegal removal of corals from its coasts.
4. At the last ICRI Meeting, a decision was made to reconstitute a Working Group on International Trade as a forum to discuss current and upcoming trade issues. Barbara Best (USAID) volunteered to chair the Working Group. As a first step in reconstituting the Working Group, the attached draft decision on upcoming CITES issues is brought forward for discussion and consideration by ICRI partners.

Action Requested

1. ICRI partners consider the attached draft decision for discussion and adoption at the ICRI CPC Meeting in Okinawa, Japan.
2. ICRI partners who are interested in participating in the Working Group on International Trade are asked to please contact the ICRI Secretariat and the Chair of the Working Group, Barbara Best. The Working Group will meet just prior to the ICRI CPC Meeting on July 3rd at 8:00 AM in the same venue at the CPC Meeting. This meeting will be an opportunity for partners to discuss their interest in the Working Group, the potential scope of work, and the attached draft decision.

Decision to Strengthen CITES Role in the Protection of Coral Reef Ecosystems

Reaffirming ICRI's *Renewed Call to Action*, which urges all parties to eliminate unsustainable fishing practices and to encourage the private sector to use and protect coral reefs and related ecosystems in ecologically sustainable ways;

Recalling the “Resolution on Trade in Coral and Coral Reef Species” (October, 1999), “Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries” (October, 2000), and the “Decision in Support of the APEC Strategy on Destructive Fishing” (April, 2001) adopted at previous meetings;

Recognizing that international trade in corals and coral reef species continues to increase and is contributing to destructive fishing practices, overexploitation and stresses on these systems, including the increased extraction of live corals, ornamental fish and invertebrates, food fish, and coral products - such as live rock, coral substrate, coral rock, and coral calcium;

Noting that international trade in corals and coral reef species adds to other stresses on coral reef ecosystems from climate change, increasing incidents of bleaching and decreasing calcification rates and reef formation;

Further recognizing the emphasis given to the impacts of trade and resource extraction on coral reef ecosystems at the 10th International Coral Reef Symposium, in Okinawa, Japan, where more than 1500 scientists and managers convened;

Noting the concerns voiced by ICRI partners regarding the need to improve and better coordinate trade data collection and enforcement through the Convention on Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), and to strengthen CITES role in coral reef protection;

Noting that coral sand, coral gravel, and small coral rubble were recently exempted from the provisions of CITES; and

Further noting that several proposals related to coral and coral reef species will be discussed at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES COP13) in October, 2004, including a proposal to define certain coral rock and coral substrate as “fossil corals” and thus exempt these specimens from Appendix II trade controls.

The International Coral Reef Initiative:

Encourages CITES Parties at COP 13 to adopt measures that increase protection for coral reef ecosystems and the role of species in those ecosystems, including corals and coral products, seahorses, humphead wrasse and sea cucumbers;

Urges CITES parties to utilize sound science and the precautionary approach, as called for under the Convention, in making recommendations and decisions;

Calls upon ICRI members to encourage national CITES authorities to **oppose** the removal of coral products from Appendix II by the designation of certain coral rock and coral substrate as fossils, since this designation (1) does not consider the functional role and importance of coral rock and substrate in the ecosystem, (2) relies on coral product descriptions rather than science to define fossil corals, (3) is extraordinary in CITES as the only separate treatment of animal specimens based upon product description and packing methods, and (4) will further erode protection for coral reef ecosystems and establish a risk-prone precedent in CITES;

Further calls upon ICRI members to encourage their national CITES authorities to **support** the listing of the humphead wrasse under Appendix II, to **support** the use of a universal minimum size (10 cm) for exports of seahorses to assist Parties in permitting trade under Appendix II; and to **support** an extended deadline for analyzing the international trade in sea cucumbers (as per CITES Decision 12.60);

Recommends that ICRI members call for international discussions to consider proposing other coral reef species threatened by international trade for listing or strengthened protection under CITES, especially those species that function as essential fish and reef habitat.

Recommends that governments of exporting countries strive to improve and harmonize the collection and analysis of data on reef species collection, exports and imports, with particular respect to species, volumes, and destination countries;

Further recommends that importing countries require imports of coral reef species be certified as taken without destructive practices and from areas under sustainable management, to provide positive economic incentives for sustainable collection and management.