

Recommendation on addressing the decline in coral reef health due to global bleaching events

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Recognizing the

- Significant contribution of coral reefs to marine biodiversity and ecosystems services;
- Benefits and services provided by these ecosystems for local communities and coastal economies;
- Frequency and intensity of global bleaching events over the last 4 decades; and
- Associated scale of degradation and overall deterioration of reef health globally.

Accordingly, the International Coral Reef Initiative urges countries and organizations working in countries to:

1. Adopt pragmatic, interoperable field methodologies that ensure accessibility for users with different technical expertise, allow for decentralized data collection, and centralized coordination and data management through regional networks.
2. Develop national and regional inter-organizational task forces that can coordinate and implement bleaching response plans, socio-economic assessments, fundraising, and logistics.
3. Encourage development of climate vulnerability assessments and introduce long-term management activities to enhance overall coral reef resilience. Furthermore, improve laws and regulations that would enhance effective management of coral reefs.
4. Introduce immediate site management measures in response to climate-changed induced mass bleaching events and associated impacts in real-time such as temporary bans on activities that increase sedimentation and reduce water quality. Enforcement against any activities that harm the reefs must be strictly implemented.
5. Embed bleaching monitoring into long-term, national, regional, and global monitoring programs, strategies and policies to ensure adaptive management and protection of coral reefs. Highly resilient reefs must be identified, mapped and strictly protected as a source of coral larvae.
6. Utilize currently existing global datasets, remote sensing products and downscaled climate projections for coral reefs in contextualizing and strengthening national management strategies and actions that address coral reef bleaching.