

14) ICRI EAST ASIA ACTIVITIES

Authors: International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) - ICRI Secretariat, c/o, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Po Box 1379 Townsville QLD 4810, Australia - and the Biodiversity Policy Division, Ministry of the Environment, Japan

Emails: icri@gbmpa.gov.au; NAOKI_AMAKO@env.go.jp

The Initial Peak and Trough of ICRI's East Asia Regional Activities

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is an informal partnership that brings together governments, international organizations, scientific entities and non-governmental organizations committed to reversing the global degradation of coral reefs and related ecosystems, such as mangrove forests and seagrass meadows, by promoting the conservation and sustainable use of these resources for future generations.

One of the recommendations that came out of ICRI's inaugural workshop held in Dumaguete City, Philippines in 1995 was for each region of the world to meet and prepare action agendas for coral reefs, based on their specific circumstances. Consequently, between 1995 and 1997, several regional workshops were held throughout the world. This regional focus, however, gradually faded in favor of General Meetings held once or twice annually and convening participants from all over the world. In the East Asia region, the first regional workshop held in Bali, Indonesia in 1996 was followed by a second regional workshop in Okinawa, Japan, the following year. A third regional workshop was then held in Cebu, Philippines in 2001. There was however limited continuity of the discussion and policies developed after these workshops, and the ICRI regional focus remained dormant for close to a decade.

During that time, it became apparent that the marine habitats of the region - recognized as the global center of diversity for the flora and fauna of coral reefs and related ecosystems – were increasingly under pressure from land and sea-based human activities resulting in the degradation and destruction of coral reefs and related ecosystems. The need to revive ICRI's regional focus in East Asia became more and more pressing.

The Revival of Regional Activities in East Asia: Strengthening Marine Protected Area (MPA) Networks

To revitalize ICRI's regional approach and to enhance conservation of coral reefs and related ecosystems in the East Asian region, three consecutive ICRI East Asia Regional Workshops were held in 2008 (Tokyo, Japan), 2009 (Hoi An City, Vietnam) and 2010 (Phuket, Thailand). The workshops focused on MPA networks to assist East Asian countries' efforts in achieving the 2012 global target on MPA networks set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). At the 2008 workshop, participants discussed priority actions for the next two years and compiled the *Provisional Plan 2009–2010*, a document listing a series of key actions to support national efforts and regional cooperation in developing MPA networks in the region. Key actions included the following: upgrading the regional MPA database; implementing the regional MPA status and gap analysis; mapping coral reef and related ecosystem habitats; identifying MPA management effectiveness systems and criteria for MPA networks appropriate for the region; and considering a suitable regional support mechanism.

A working group was formed to implement these actions from 2009 to 2010. The results of activities and discussions held in regional workshops were compiled into an *ICRI East Asia Regional Strategy on MPA Networks 2010*. The Regional Strategy is not a comprehensive strategy on MPA networks, but strongly reflects interests and discussions held by participants in regional workshops, which aimed to:

- (i) create a regional mechanism for cooperation and coordination;
- (ii) follow up on the Provisional Plan 2009-2010; and
- (iii) reflect priority recommendations to regional and national policies.

In response to the suggested actions listed in the Regional Strategy, a follow-up workshop was held in Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2011, and another workshop is due to be held in Jeju, Korea in 2012. It is envisaged that, through these workshops and related activities, efforts on MPA networks are enhanced and regional collaboration strengthened among ICRI partners in East Asia.

This regional activity is particularly relevant to Target 10 (minimizing anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs) of the CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It also addresses Target 6 (sustainable fishery) and Target 11 (protected areas).