

Recommendation on Developing MPA Networks

This recommendation was approved by the ICRI members at the the ICRI General Meeting held in Tokyo, Japan (April 23rd - 24th, 2007).

Recognizing the need to continue efforts to meet the commitments taken at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to develop and facilitate the use of diverse approaches and tools for conserving and managing vulnerable marine ecosystems, including the possible establishment of marine protected areas, consistent with international law and based on the best scientific information available, including the development of representative networks by 2012;

Noting Decision VII/5 of the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which provides for the elaborated programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity, including the establishment of national and regional marine protected areas;

Recognizing that the status of and approaches to marine protected areas varies considerably among ICRI member countries and regions, with some ICRI member countries and regions advanced and/or establishing such areas --in many cases in cooperation with NGOs, scientific communities, indigenous and local communities--and with other countries still in a developing stage,

Further noting that there is a pressing need at all levels to take best efforts in developing MPA networks to conserve and effectively manage vulnerable coral reefs and related ecosystems, in order to stop and reverse their degradation,

ICRI encourages its members to:

Take urgent actions to establish and effectively manage representative regional and national networks of MPAs that include coral reefs and related ecosystems, through the application of ecosystem-based approaches, and based on sound science, and consistent with international law, and including but not limited to:

- i) Facilitate intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation utilizing, inter alia, relevant networks, partnerships and meetings, including ICRI General Meeting;

- ii) Apply ecological criteria for the identification of marine and coastal areas that include coral reefs and related ecosystems that would benefit from designation as a marine protected area network;
- iii) Contribute to existing global and regional spatial databases on existing and planned MPAs such as the World Database on Protected Areas, that include coral reefs and related ecosystems;
- iv) Use information from these databases and additional analyses to identify gaps in current MPA coverage that need to be filled in order to meet the goal of creating representative networks;
- v) Undertake efforts to determine the effectiveness of existing MPAs in meeting their objectives and to use the results of these assessments to improve MPA management;
- vi) Encourage bilateral and multilateral donor agencies to support countries that are making political and financial commitments to expand and improve the management of their MPA networks, especially those that include coral reefs and related ecosystems, with a view to achieving long term financial sustainability of these MPA networks; and
- vii) Promote the application of relevant ecosystem-based management tools in the development of marine protected area networks that facilitate biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and cultural values and uses, within broader integrated coastal and marine management frameworks.