

International Coral Reef Initiative

Call To Action

June 2, 1995

The nations and organizations supporting the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) urge attention to the following:

The Global Problem

Coral reefs are in serious decline globally, especially those near shallow shelves and dense populations. It has been estimated that 10 percent of the earth's coral reefs have already been seriously degraded and a much greater percentage is threatened. If allowed to continue, this decline is likely to lead to the loss of most of the world's reef resources during the next century.

The Threats to Coastal Ecosystems

The reasons for the decline in reef health are varied, complex, and often difficult to accurately determine. While natural events--such as storm damage, predator infestations, and variations in temperature--have some impact on reef ecosystems, human activity is a primary agent of degradation. Contributing factors include:

- Direct impacts from activities such as resource extraction, in-filling, over-harvesting, and diving and boating activities, as well as nutrient enrichment and toxic pollution.
- Inadequate planning and management of coastal land use, including upland activities.
- Potential adverse effects of climate change, including temperature and sea-level changes, alteration of natural patterns of precipitation, tropical storms, and ocean circulation.

Population growth, increasing pollution and increased uses of the fragile resources will accelerate the decline in coral reef ecosystems, with societal and ecological effects extending beyond reef environments.

The Significance of Coral Reef Ecosystems

Coral reef ecosystems offer benefits to humankind beyond those realized for food production, tourism, recreation, aesthetics, and shoreline protection.

Capable of sustaining innumerable coastal communities worldwide, these ecosystems also have great economic, social, and cultural importance to nations,

and to entire regions. As competition among multiple uses of reef resources increases, so too will their significance to the human populations that depend on them.

Coral reef ecosystems are among the most biologically productive and diverse in the world; they also serve as indicators of environment health. These facts were recognized at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, where coral reefs and associated systems were accorded a high priority for protection in Agenda 21.

Reducing the Threats

Threats from human-related impacts can be minimized or eliminated through:

- Improved and sustained management practices.
- Increased national and local capacities for coral reef ecosystem management.
- Increased political support for managing coral reef ecosystems; and
- The sharing of existing important and new information related to maintaining the health of these ecosystems.

The ICRI governments endorse the following measures, to be implemented through global, regional, and national actions:

Coastal Management

- Incorporate integrated coastal management measures into local, national, and regional coastal development plans and projects, and support their long-term implementation. These measures will serve as the framework for achieving the sustainable use of, and maintaining the health of, coral reefs and associated environments.
- Develop coral reef initiatives (regional, national and/or local). These should use an ecosystem-based, integrated approach that encourages participation and includes programs for community-based management or co-management of reef resources.

Capacity Building

- Establish regional networks to share knowledge, skills, and information.
- Develop and support educational and informational programs aimed at reducing adverse impacts of human activities.
- Establish information exchanges with stakeholder communities.

- Improve developing nations access to bilateral, multilateral, and other forms of financial and technical support for coral reef management.

Research and Monitoring

- Use regional networks to achieve better coordination and cooperation among national research programs.
- Promote linkages between regional and global research and monitoring networks, such as CARICOMP (Caribbean Coastal Marine Productivity), PACICOMP (Pacific Coastal Marine Productivity), and GOOS (Global Ocean Observing System).
- Support research and monitoring programs, projects, or activities identified as essential to managing coral reef ecosystems for the benefit of humankind.
- Promote the development and maintenance of a global coral reef monitoring network.

Review

Periodically review the extent and success of implementation of actions identified in the initiative.

The Nations and organizations supporting ICRI call upon all other relevant, international entities, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the private sector and scientific communities, to undertake the actions above.