**ICRI Guidance Note for a Coral Reef Positive Global Biodiversity Framework**

The [International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)](http://www.icriforum.org) includes 45 countries that together are custodians of 75% of the world's coral reefs. In May 2020, ICRI adopted a consensus [recommendation](https://icriforum.org/documents/recommendation-on-the-inclusion-of-coral-reefs-and-related-ecosystems-within-the-cbd-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework/) in support of coral reefs and related ecosystems through the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its monitoring framework. The guidance below describes the critical elements that should be included in the GBF text and focuses on how to deliver against the ICRI [recommendation](https://icriforum.org/post2020/).

In Montreal, ICRI is asking CBD Parties to deliver [three key actions](https://icriforum.org/post2020/) on behalf of coral reefs. This note sets out both the progress that has been made in implementing the ICRI recommendation and what remains to be done. Detailed guidance on how this relates to the GBF composite text ([CBD/WG2020/4/L.2-ANNEX](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/079d/0d26/91af171843b6d4e9bee25086/wg2020-04-l-02-annex-en.pdf)) is provided in **Annex 1**.

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| 1. Prioritise the vulnerable ecosystems we depend on, particularly coral reefs.  ***Why is this important?***Coral reefs are perhaps the most threatened ecosystem in the world, despite their immense value to an estimated one billion people for their livelihoods, food security, and coastal protection.  ***How are we doing so far?*** There are important references to critical and vulnerable ecosystems in the draft text of Goal A, Targets 1, 2 and 3. Without such prioritisation, the GBF will not meaningfully reduce the risk of rapid decline and potential collapse of ecosystems like coral reefs. The parties will need to ensure that both the conservation and restoration of threatened ecosystems are appropriately addressed.  ***What do CBD Parties still need to do?*** Explicitly prioritise and define “critical,” “vulnerable,” and/or “climate-vulnerable” ecosystems such as coral reefs in goals and targets to incentivize implementation efforts and allocate resources to those ecosystems (see Annex 1 for elements in the composite text that will achieve this outcome). |
| 2. Retain the integrity of existing coral reef ecosystems and restore around them.  ***Why is this important?*** We need to act strategically to avoid further loss of critical/vulnerable ecosystems. We need to take action to reduce the drivers of biodiversity loss and, where feasible, restore these ecosystems, while recognising that the current rate of loss of coral reefs will never be offset by restoration efforts alone.  ***How are we doing so far*?** The concept of maintaining, enhancing, and restoring ecological integrity of ecosystems is included as unbracketed text in both options of Goal A, and as bracketed elements in T1, 2, and 3. Targets 1, 2 and 3 should continue to be considered as a package in line with the “[conservation hierarchy](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/Post2020/postsbi/biodiversify1.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1661964175583978&usg=AOvVaw10uSMyg9MtM37zXbzEGci2),” which is international best practice in the management of environmental impacts. The conservation hierarchy requires an emphasis on avoidance of negative impacts to achieve positive outcomes over time. The GBF should continue to reflect this prioritisation.  ***What do CBD Parties still need to do?***Ensure that all GBF targets reflect the conservation hierarchy, with a focus on avoidance of impacts(see Annex 1 for elements in the composite text that will achieve this outcome). |
| 3. Adopt global coral reef indicators.  ***Why is this important?***Goals and targets have limited usefulness if you cannot measure whether they have been achieved. Monitoring coral reefs through a comprehensive, globally consistent set of indicators will incentivize action, allow for adaptive management at different scales, and increase accountability. [ICRI’s recommended indicators](https://icriforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Update-ICRI-Recommended-Indicators-Geneva-2022.pdf), adopted by consensus by the ICRI community of coral reef scientists and policymakers, provide the necessary tools to monitor and assess progress. The GBF text should reflect the need for the bottom-up delivery of ecosystem-specific datasets that can be aggregated at different scales as part of the monitoring framework.  ***How are we doing so far?*** *T*he ICRI recommended coral reef-specific indicators are included in the current version of the monitoring framework, including as component and complementary indicators. These indicators will not only promote more effective management of coral reefs, they can be used to demonstrate the value of scientifically sound, consistent, coherent, and ecosystem-specific monitoring to support evidence-based decision making and allocation of resources.  ***What do CBD Parties still need to do?*** Retain the ICRI-recommended indicators for coral reefs within the GBF monitoring framework. Retaining ecosystem and context-specific indicators as component or complementary indicators will be important so Parties can report on the biodiversity they contain. The ICRI-Recommended indicators measure coral reef extent, integrity, protection, restoration and water quality and work together to create a globally consistent, scientifically sound means to establish baselines and track coral reef health against GBF goals and targets. |

ANNEX 1: Opportunities to strengthen the GBF and monitoring framework #ForCoral within the draft text:

The highlights denote wording already in the draft GBF text ([CBD/WG2020/4/L.2-ANNEX](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/079d/0d26/91af171843b6d4e9bee25086/wg2020-04-l-02-annex-en.pdf)) that supports the ICRI recommendation. Whilst comments focus on Goal A and Targets 1 and 2, Target 3 is critical to the protection of coral reefs. Coral reefs also face threats across Targets 4 through 8 and make critically important contributions to people (Goal B, Targets 9-13). Comments are also provided on how the goal/target can be measured for coral reef ecosystems.

**Goal A:** There are many helpful elements in the Goal A text, particularly language that highlights “vulnerable” and “threatened” ecosystems (consistent with 1 above).

Current drafting in ([CBD/WG2020/4/L.2-ANNEX](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/079d/0d26/91af171843b6d4e9bee25086/wg2020-04-l-02-annex-en.pdf)):

*Option 1:* The integrity, connectivity and resilience of [all] [vulnerable and threatened natural] ecosystems are maintained, restored or enhanced, increasing [or maintaining] [by at least 5 per cent by 2030 and [15] [20] per cent by 2050] the area, connectivity and integrity of the full range of natural ecosystems [taking into account a natural state baseline] [and the risk of collapse of ecosystems is reduced by [--] per cent].

[Beginning now,] the human-induced extinction of [all] [known] [threatened] species is halted [by 2030] [by 2050], [[and] extinction risk is reduced [by at least [10] [20] [25] per cent] by 2030 and [eliminated] [reduced [to a minimum] [by 50 per cent]] [halved] by 2050,] and the [conservation status] [average population] [abundance] [and distribution] of [depleted populations of] all [wild and domesticated] [native] [threatened] species is [increased [or maintained] by at least [10] [20] per cent by 2030 and] [increased to healthy and resilient levels by 2050].

[The genetic diversity and adaptive potential of [all] [known] [wild and domesticated] species is safeguarded and [all genetically distinct populations are] maintained [by 2030, at least [95] per cent of genetic diversity among and within populations of [native] [wild and domesticated] species is maintained by 2050].]

*Option 2 (Not negotiated in Nairobi but still on the table):* Biodiversity is conserved, maintaining and enhancing the [area,] connectivity [, restoration] and integrity of all [terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine] ecosystems [and reducing the risk of ecosystem collapse], halting [from now] human-induced extinctions [and reducing extinction risk [to zero by 2050]], supporting healthy and resilient populations of [native] species, and maintaining genetic diversity of populations and their adaptive potential [numerical values to be added].

Comment on headline indicators for Goal A: Both ecosystem headline indicators proposed by the [expert workshop on the monitoring framework](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/3190/c3f4/1d9fe2d2dedc8c8b97023750/id-om-2022-01-02-en.pdf) can be applied for coral reef ecosystems.

* Extent of natural ecosystems by type (fed using A.15)
* Red List of Ecosystems, a composite index that is calculated using a number of indicators. For example, A Red List of Ecosystems assessment for coral reefs has been delivered in the Western Indian Ocean (Obura et al. 2021) using data on hard coral cover (currently complementary indicators a.14 and a.13), fleshy algae cover (indicator a.21), and abundance of herbivorous fish and piscivorous fish (both would fall under indicator a.46). Should parties wish to adopt the Red List of Ecosystems, or UN SEEA Condition Accounting, or any other framework using composite approaches, the monitoring framework should specify that such metrics will draw on ecosystem-specific indicators at the complementary level.

**Target 1:** There are fundamental differences in how Target 1 is being interpreted, which will have implications for how the target will be implemented and measured. From a coral reef perspective, Target 1 should focus on: 1) addressing biodiversity loss resulting from land and sea use change; and 2) retaining ecosystems through the use of spatial management. The ICRI recommendation (1 and 2 above) are relevant to this task: avoid further loss of critical/vulnerable ecosystems, take action to avoid negative impacts, protect coral reefs and, where feasible, restore them in a way that is consistent with the conservation hierarchy.

Current drafting in ([CBD/WG2020/4/L.2-ANNEX](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/079d/0d26/91af171843b6d4e9bee25086/wg2020-04-l-02-annex-en.pdf)): Ensure that [all] areas are under [equitable participatory] [integrated biodiversity-inclusive] spatial planning [or other effective management processes], [addressing land and sea use change] [[retaining all]/[minimizing loss of] [intact ecosystems]] [critical and threatened ecosystems] [intact areas with high- biodiversity] [and other areas of high [biodiversity value[s]] [importance] [ecological integrity]], enhancing [ecological] connectivity and integrity, [minimizing negative impacts on biodiversity] [maintaining ecosystem functions and services] while [safeguarding]/[respecting] the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities [in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international human rights law.]

Comment on indicators to measure Target 1: The monitoring framework should include ecosystem-specific component and complementary indicators that provide information on the condition of the ecosystems and that can be components of a composite index for Goal A like the Red List of Ecosystems)[e.g., live hard coral cover (a.14 and a.13), fleshy algae cover (indicator a.21), and abundance of herbivorous fish and piscivorous fish (both would fall under indicator a.46)].

**Target 2:** The proposed language “priority [areas][ecosystems] such as [threatened ecosystems]” would be useful to include to prioritise coral reefs. Using the wording “enhance ecological integrity, connectivity and functioning” aligns well with the ICRI recommendation.

Current drafting in ([CBD/WG2020/4/L.2-ANNEX](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/079d/0d26/91af171843b6d4e9bee25086/wg2020-04-l-02-annex-en.pdf)): Ensure that [at least] [20] [30] [per cent]/ [at least [1] billion ha] [globally] of [degraded] [terrestrial,] [inland waters,] [freshwater], [coastal] and [marine]] [areas] [ecosystems] are under [active] [effective] [ecological] restoration [and rehabilitation] [measures] [, taking into account their natural state as a baseline [reference]], [with a focus on [restoring] [nationally identified] [[priority [areas] [ecosystems]] such as [threatened ecosystems] and [areas of particular importance for biodiversity]]] in order to enhance [biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services] [[ecological] integrity, connectivity and functioning] and [biocultural ecosystems managed by indigenous peoples and local communities] [, increase areas of natural and semi- natural ecosystems and to support climate change adaptation and mitigation], [with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities] [\*] [and through adequate means of implementation] [\*].

[\* subject to b(bis) and other relevant targets]

Comment on indicators: ICRI is contributing to the task force on monitoring for the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, which has been charged with developing indicators to support Target 2. ICRI has recommended an indicator that can measure the area and integrity of restoration for coral reef ecosystems: “Live coral cover in restored coral reef areas.” This is a direct ecosystem-specific translation of the headline indicator “[Percentage][Area] of degraded [and] [or] converted ecosystems that are under [ecological] restoration”.

It is a composite indicator that combines information from the live coral cover metric, which has been recommended by ICRI[[1]](#footnote-1). The indicator is also an Essential Ocean Variable, which has been identified by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission’s Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), with the Restored Reef Areal Dimension (RRAD) indicator[[2]](#footnote-2), which is recommended as a Universal Metric by the Coral Reef Consortium. This indicator provides an approximation of the overall reef area in which corals are planted and the area that restored corals have contributed to increased live coral cover over time. This metric is valuable as it provides guidance for reporting standardised project size and area of restored reef to gauge the overall impact and success of a restoration project.

**Target 3:** Area-based conservation is an important management tool for coral reefs. Including “threatened ecosystems” and “areas of particular importance biodiversity” would help prioritise coral reefs in the context of effective area-based management of coral reef ecosystems.

Current drafting in ([CBD/WG2020/4/L.2-ANNEX](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/079d/0d26/91af171843b6d4e9bee25086/wg2020-04-l-02-annex-en.pdf)): Ensure and enable at least [30 per cent] of [all [---] and of [---]] [globally] [at the national level] especially [key biodiversity areas[, ecologically or biologically significant areas, threatened ecosystems] and other] areas of particular importance for biodiversity [and ecosystem functions and services] are [effectively] conserved through [effectively] [well] managed, ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed [systems] [networks] of [highly and fully] protected areas [including a substantial portion that is strictly protected] and other effective area-based conservation measures, [and [indigenous] [traditional] territories] [, where applicable,] [which prohibits environmentally damaging activities] and integrated into the wider land[-]/[scapes] and seascapes [and national and regional ecological networks], [in accordance with national priorities and capabilities,] [including the right to economic development, will not affect the right or ability of all Parties to access financial and other resources required for the effective implementation of the whole Framework,] [while ensuring that [sustainable use] of these areas, if in place, contributes to biodiversity conservation,] [recognizing the contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities to their management] and [respecting] the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Temporary placeholder:

[[all land and of [seas] [ocean9] areas [including] all ecosystems10] [all terrestrial, inland waters, coastal and marine ecosystems] [ecosystems as defined by Article 2 of the Convention] [terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems],

Subject to B Bis and other relevant targets:

[including] [over their lands, territories and resources] [, with their free, prior and informed consent] [, [and [including] acting] in accordance with [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international human rights law] [national [circumstances and] legislation [and] [as well as] relevant international instruments] [, where applicable]].

Comment on indicators: The headline indicator proposed by the [expert workshop on the monitoring framework](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/3190/c3f4/1d9fe2d2dedc8c8b97023750/id-om-2022-01-02-en.pdf), “Coverage of protected areas and OECMS, by effectiveness, KBAs & ecosystems,” can be applied to coral reef ecosystems via the ICRI Recommended indicator, “Protected area coverage of coral reefs,” which is currently a component indicator (T3.4).

1. ICRI (2020) <https://icriforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Addendum_ICRI_Indicators_Adopted.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Restored Reef Areal Dimension (RRAD)” this is a quick approximation of the overall reef area in which corals are planted and the area that restored corals have spread over time. This metric is valuable as it provides guidance for reporting standardised project size and area of restored reef to gauge the overall impact and success of a restoration project. (See Coral Reef Restoration Monitoring Guide) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)