

Resolution to extend the ICRI *ad hoc* committee for coral reef restoration and adaptation

Background

In response to the acceleration in coral reef declines, there is growing recognition that traditional coral reef management approaches alone are not sufficient to counter the increasingly frequent stresses imposed by a changing climate and direct human pressure. This has led to a surge in interest in active interventions to conserve, protect, restore, and increase the resilience of coral reefs.

The ICRI Plan of Action 2018-2020 called for the promotion of leading reef restoration practices by facilitating partnerships, investment, and capacity-building among ICRI members. ICRI established an *ad hoc* Committee on Coral Reef Restoration at its General Meeting in Monaco in December 2018, and this ran for four years. Membership included representatives from 20 ICRI members. The Committee developed several products (i.e., reports, peer-reviewed papers, best-practice guidelines), identified common interests, facilitated global and regional collaborations, and helped identify opportunities for co-investment in research and development on coral reef restoration and adaptation.

The current ICRI Plan of Action 2021-2024 includes Action 1.C:

Promote and build capacity for the restoration of resilient coral reefs.

Coral reefs are threatened by rapidly deteriorating environmental conditions including warmer ocean temperatures, ocean acidification, poor water quality, and pandemic-scale disease outbreaks. Coral intervention strategies have arisen with a goal of increasing the long-term persistence and resilience of tropical coral reefs and their ecological functions. These interventions include stress-hardening, translocation of non-native coral stocks or species, manipulation of symbiotic partnerships within the coral holobiont, managed selection, genetic modification, and engineering the local environment. Accelerating and sharing innovations to increase the scale and reduce the cost of interventions is paramount if impact is to be achieved within realistic timeframes.

Illustrative activities listed in the Plan for Action linked to Action 1.C:

- Maintain the ICRI Restoration Hub as a source of relevant information, key contacts, and initiatives.
- Update materials based on experiences thus far and conduct mentored trainings using the Manager's Guide to Coral Reef Restoration Planning and Design and the report Coral Reef Restoration as a Strategy to Improve Ecosystem Services.
- Continue to work on recommendations in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's A Decision Framework for Interventions to Increase the Persistence and Resilience of Coral Reefs.
- Train facilitators to conduct mentored trainings using the Manager's Guide to Coral Reef Restoration Planning and Design.
- Develop closer linkages with the *ad hoc* Committee on Resilience-Based Management and the *ad hoc* Committee on developing a recommendation for a Post-2020 coral reef target if these continue.

Moreover, Target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework states “*Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity*”.



in this context, it is therefore proposed to extend the mandate of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Reef Restoration and Adaptation for a further year with the Terms of Reference described in Annex 1.

Annex 1: Proposed Terms of Reference for the *ad hoc* Committee on Reef Restoration and Adaptation

The *ad hoc* Committee will continue to promote best practices in reef restoration. The committee will transition away from being chaired by Australian representatives and will now be co-chaired by the Coral Restoration Consortium, and UNEP- World Conservation Monitoring Centre, in collaboration with the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute.

Working with ICRI members, countries committed to reef conservation and other relevant partners, the *ad hoc* committee will continue its mission to:

- Provide a coordinating mechanism for international collaboration on coral reef restoration research and development.
- Advocate for the use of best practice restoration techniques and identify and streamline examples of relevant policy, regulation, and legislation as part of a broader strategy that involves traditional management, mitigation policy and reducing carbon emissions in order to maintain coral reef function, structure and resilience.
- In close collaboration with the Coral Restoration Consortium, facilitate the transfer of new knowledge of restoration techniques to managers and restoration practitioners.
- Maintain the Restoration Hub on the ICRI website.
- Support the UN Decade of Ocean Science and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and the Global Biodiversity Framework to help prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of coral reef ecosystems worldwide by promoting knowledge-based restoration, upscaling, monitoring, and capacity building.

Possible deliverables:

If resources allow the *ad hoc* Committee would also:

- Develop targeted guidelines and long-term strategies on the topics of permitting, approvals, and regulations to help bridge the gap between permitting and the practice of coral reef restoration and adaptation.
- Enhance training and capacity building, with a focus on the tourism-sector, and based on training materials such as the *Manager's Guide to Coral Reef Restoration Planning and Design* and the report *Coral Reef Restoration as a strategy to improve ecosystem services*.
- Continue work to better define, monitor and report on the effectiveness of coral reef restoration.
- Update the Coral Reef Restoration Database hosted on the ICRI website.