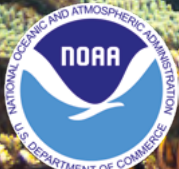




IMPACT REPORT 2023





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IMPACT REPORT 2023

FOREWORD

Having been part of ICRI for over 20 years, it is with great pleasure and a sense of accomplishment that I present to you the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) 2023 Impact Report, a testament to our collective efforts in the preservation and sustainable management of coral reefs worldwide. Over the past year, ICRI has undertaken significant initiatives to address the challenges facing coral reefs globally most notably hosting ICRI's first face-to-face General Meeting since 2019 in Kona, Hawai'i, under the chairmanship of the United States of America, building upon achievements in 2022. In 2023, ICRI's membership grew to 101, including 45 countries who host over 75% of the World's coral reefs.

This year also saw the launch of the Coral Reef Breakthrough, a global vision grounded in science-based, measurable, and achievable goals for state and non-state actors to collectively conserve, protect, and restore coral reefs at the scale that is needed to secure the future of these vital ecosystems and the highly valuable contributions they provide to people.

ICRI continue to work closely with partners such as with the Global Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform (CORDAP), the Global Fund

for Coral Reefs (GFCR), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to mobilise action and resources to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems.

This Impact Report serves as an overview of the main accomplishments of ICRI's collaborative efforts. The commitment and dedication of ICRI members, partners and supporters have been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes and safeguarding coral reefs and their associated ecosystems.

Whilst ICRI continues to be steadfast in its efforts to conserve, protect and restore coral reefs, it is without doubt that coral reefs face an existential threat and a coupling of immediate and long-term management strategies, alongside sustainable financing, are needed.

I look forward to the continued successes in the collective effort to safeguard coral reefs throughout 2024, and on the road to 2030.

Francis Staub
ICRI Global Coordinator



PLAN OF ACTION 2021-2023

ICRI – USA TURNING THE TIDE FOR CORAL REEFS

The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss have brought into stark relief the need for greater collaboration and action at the international level to conserve, manage, and restore coral reefs.

It is in this context that the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Secretariat launched its Plan of Action for 2021-2024, Turning the Tide for Coral Reefs, from its current Chair, the United States of America. The ICRI Secretariat maintains progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) and Goal 14 (conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources), while serving as a vital platform to support coral reef countries in the implementation of their national commitments and international agreements including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Throughout 2023, ICRI's members, its Chairs and the Secretariat have worked to better incorporate science into action, strengthen leadership and emerging technologies, whilst promoting collaboration and communication among stakeholders. Efforts have been taken to incorporate the knowledge and intrinsic values of Indigenous Peoples and local communities regarding coral reefs and their associated ecosystems into ICRI's actions, evidenced through the hosting of ICRI's first ever Indigenous Local Knowledge (ILK) listening

sessions and Youth Delegation at the occasion of the 37th ICRI general meeting.

Every opportunity has been taken, and will continue to be taken, to raise the plight of coral reefs with the broader international community and the actions that can be taken at local, regional, and global levels to secure their protection and recovery. Through 2023 this included the representation of the Initiative at 24 international events, including the organisation of side events at international meetings. In early 2023, at Our Ocean conference in Panama, ICRI held a side event in partnership with the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, UK DEFRA, Bloomberg Philanthropies, United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, Race to Resilience and United Nations Environment Programme, entitled 'Future of Reefs: Innovative Solutions and Commitments to Increase the Resilience of Coral Reefs and their Guardian Communities'. Moreover, at the Twenty-third Global Meeting of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, ICRI held a side event that emphasised the strong collaboration between ICRI and the UNEP regional seas programme. This highlighted the pivotal role the regions hold for the preservation of coral reefs on a global scale, from supporting

monitoring activities at the national scale, to shaping policies and influencing decision makers within international process. In addition, ICRI partnered with the MIRPURI Foundation to launch the 2023 Ocean Award, focusing on raising awareness and finding solutions for coral reefs across the globe.



PLAN OF ACTION

THEMES 1 & 2

Theme 1

Preparing for the Future: Promoting Resilient Coral Reefs

With the increased awareness of the vulnerability of coral reefs and their vital role that they play in supporting nature and people, there is an urgent need to build coral reef resilience into marine conservation efforts globally, including in global policy frameworks.

Building on ICRI's work in the build-up and adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's (GBF) 4 goals and 23 targets, an ad hoc committee on integrating coral reefs into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) was created. ICRI assembled a guidance document for revising, updating, and implementing NBSAPs to integrate coral reef ecosystems, including guidance on reporting and coral reef indicators, populated with national case studies, and appropriate alternative resources that align with, and build upon, the GBF Monitoring Framework and previous ICRI ad hoc committees.

Throughout 2023, the Reef Restoration *ad hoc* committee continued to assess and document the global **needs and priorities** for current and future

reef restoration and adaptation programs, identify global **research and development priorities** to deliver method, productivity, and cost breakthroughs, as well as distinguish **priority drivers** and areas for reef investment (including mitigation policy). The highlights include writing a book chapter for the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, on *Coral restoration in a changing climate*, and being instrumental in the development of the global targets under the Coral Reef Breakthrough.

ICRI also continued its actions to build capacity around Resilience-based Management (RBM) through its ad hoc committee. A major activity through 2023 was the development of RBM case studies, in collaboration with the Great Barrier Marine Park Authority, that aim to provide guidance for the Crown-of-thorn control, master reef guides and climate change resilience and adaptation planning tool to name a few. These will be released in 2024.

Beyond its ad hoc committees, and to build capacity and awareness on the severe decline of coral reefs, ICRI filmed a series of short videos, at the occasion of the ICRI 37th General Meeting, featuring experts in the field, to allow access to in-depth knowledge

about the significance of coral reefs and the imminent dangers they face. These videos present complex scientific information in a more accessible medium to a diverse audience, serving as a powerful tool to inspire collective action. A total of 11 videos, known as the 'Ask the expert series', are available in English with French and Spanish subtitles at: <https://icriforum.org/icri-ask-the-expert>



Other activities included the release of the Coral Reef Breakthrough and a collaboration with CORAL to create awareness for coral bleaching, in which over 150 organisations joined the campaign.

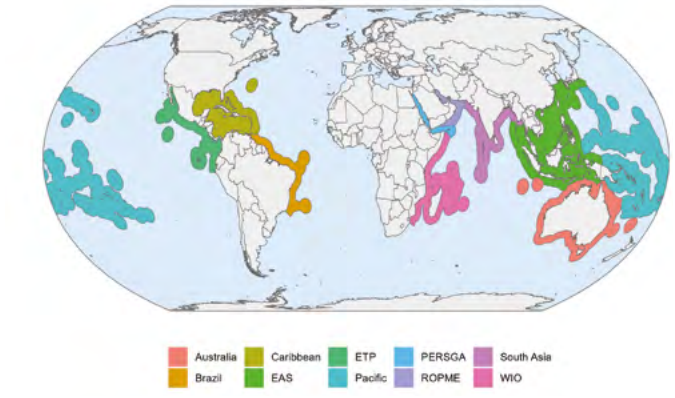


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Theme 2

Coral Reef Science and oceanography: advancing and utilising the latest science and technology

GCRMN The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), an operational network of ICRI, was established in 1995 to monitor the condition of the world's coral reefs. GCRMN is hosted by the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS) and operates through **10 regional nodes**. In September 2023, GCRMN convened 31 participants to discuss the next global report among other topics, during an in-person Steering Committee Meeting at the occasion of the 37th ICRI General Meeting. This marked the first in-person gathering of the GCRMN steering committee since **the March 2022 meeting in Monaco**.



Over 30 internal meetings were held throughout 2023, with 14 additional meetings undertaken, either to improve the collaboration between the GCRMN network and other existing initiatives, (such as the integration of socio-economic data into coral reef monitoring through the Global Socioeconomic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management,

SocMon), or to provide technical support to members of the network. In May 2023, the GCRMN also established its **Data Task Force**, to increase reproducibility, and robustness of future GCRMN reports.

In June 2023, with the theme 'Coral reef science and management in a rapidly changing world', the 5th Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium (APCRS - 5) was attended by ICRI and the GCRMN to expand the East Asia network. ICRI was invited to speak as part of a panel session hosted by NOAA regarding the UN Ocean Decade, focusing predominantly on how international partnerships and networks can strengthen coral reef conservation efforts globally. In addition, a booth was set up and served as a multifunctional space for information exchange, networking, education, and collaboration. It played a crucial role in bringing together diverse stakeholders to work towards the conservation of coral reefs.

In November 2023, the **Pacific Regional Node** convened 19 participants from different countries and territories in Auckland, New Zealand, for a workshop to drive the production of the "Status and Trends of Coral Reefs in the Pacific: 2024" regional report. The workshop enabled participants to strengthen their regional connectivity and the Pacific node to further expand its network, providing opportunities for collaboration between participants as well exchange of knowledge, and lessons learnt.

The **Caribbean node** convened 17 participants representing nine different countries, and territories and economies from the Caribbean region, at the



SocMon released two reports in 2023, the **2022 Global SocMon Report** and the **Global SocMon Strategic Plan: 2022-2026**



occasion of the 76th annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI 76), for the development of a roadmap to produce the next regional GCRMN report.

Other regional coordinators were highly active throughout the year with regional meetings conducted in the Western Indian Ocean, Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), East Asian and Eastern Tropical Pacific regions.

To strengthen the collaboration with SocMon, an initiative aimed at helping coastal managers better understand and incorporate the socioeconomic context into coastal management programs ICRI funded the participation of 4 SocMon coordinators to attend the GM. In addition, funding was provided to produce visual infographics to effectively disseminate crucial information and foster a greater global awareness of SocMon's goals and accomplishments.



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PLAN OF ACTION THEMES 3 & 4

Theme 3 Local threat reduction: integrating response planning frameworks



Reef response plan panel participants

At the ICRI 37th General Meeting, a series of presentations were delivered addressing existing response plans, including, Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD), Lionfish Management, El Niño forecasting and Coral Bleaching Toolkits. These were then followed by a panel session to discuss resilient, comprehensive, and collaborative coral reef response plans that address the multifaceted threats facing coral reef ecosystems including

lessons learned from different strategies adopted by various countries and organisations. Two of the main outcomes of the discussions included a proposal of a series of webinars to be produced on response planning and how to communicate the data already available into an accessible manner to be used across countries, regions and globally.

Theme 4 Diversity and inclusion: expanding the coral reef community



ICRI youth delegation

The ICRI 37th General Meeting strongly focused on Theme 4 and aimed to broaden the coral reef community to include underrepresented voices, including the Indigenous, local, and youth communities. The meeting hosted a cultural exchange at the Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park, which preserves, interprets, and perpetuates Hawaiian cultural heritage providing the Hawaiian people and visitors to Hawai'i Island a chance to connect with the mana (magic or spirit) of traditional Native Hawaiian culture.

ICRI recognises that indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) practices hold the key to **effective reef management**. Integrating these perspectives with scientific research results in a holistic approach that can better protect these fragile ecosystems. Therefore prior to the commencement of the meeting, a **'Listening Session'** was organised to involve Indigenous Local Knowledge participants and learn from their wisdom, where there was interest and consent to be involved. The session was

chaired by 'Aulani Wilhelm, *Senior Vice President for Oceans at Conservation International* and Kyle Whyte, *Science Envoy for Indigenous and Local Knowledge, U.S. Department of State* and George Willis Pack Professor, *School for Environment and Sustainability, University of Michigan* with speakers from Australia, Hawai'i, New Zealand, Federated States of Micronesia and Panama. Participants shared their unique perspectives, values, and traditions to ensure the integration of ILK voices into ICRI discussions from the onset. This was a powerful session which offered a platform for voices that are often marginalised, and provide unique perspectives and wisdom, contributing to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of diverse coral reef issues.

"We are representing intergenerational knowledge and whatever we take back to the people that we represent is a proactive movement. We know what hasn't worked in the past so what can we do to move forward positively. We need to understand each other's values, where we come from and then start to strategise how we can do things better".

- Troy Johnson, Wulgurukaba Traditional Owner from the Townsville and Yunbenun (Magnetic Island) region.

A reflection document was produced and presented to ICRI members for the inclusion of Indigenous and Local Knowledge into coral reef conservation, and this was then replicated for a Youth panel. The

involvement of youth is crucial due to their unique perspectives, fresh ideas, and potential to drive innovative solutions. For the first time in ICRI's history, a youth delegation formed an informal working group, led by Diwigdi Valiente (Gunu peoples of Panama) and Esther Maina (Kenyan Youth Biodiversity Network), throughout the duration of the general meeting to develop reflections for the inclusion of Youth in future ICRI actions and global efforts.

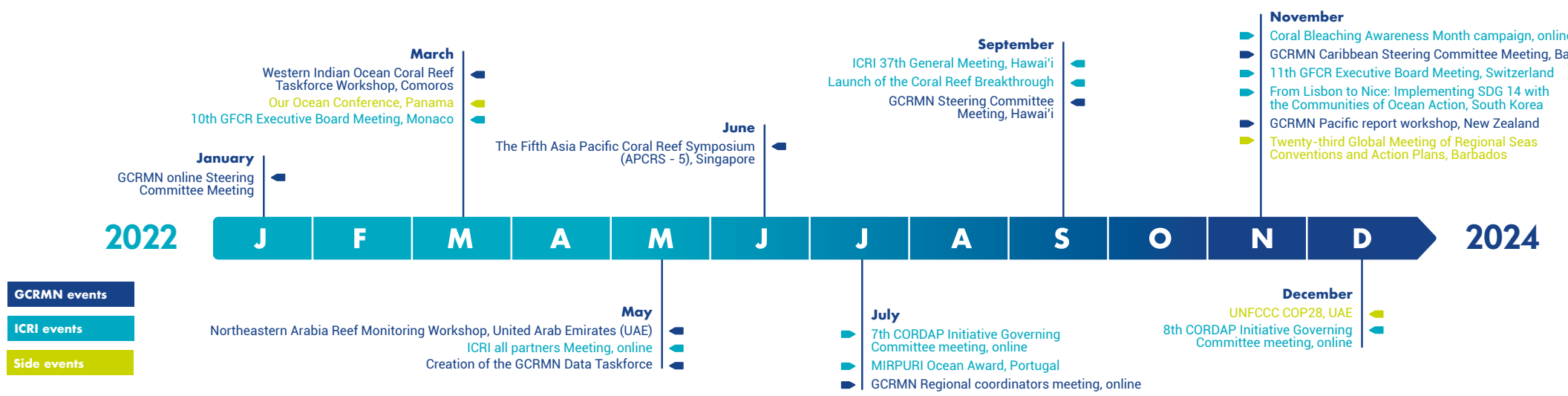
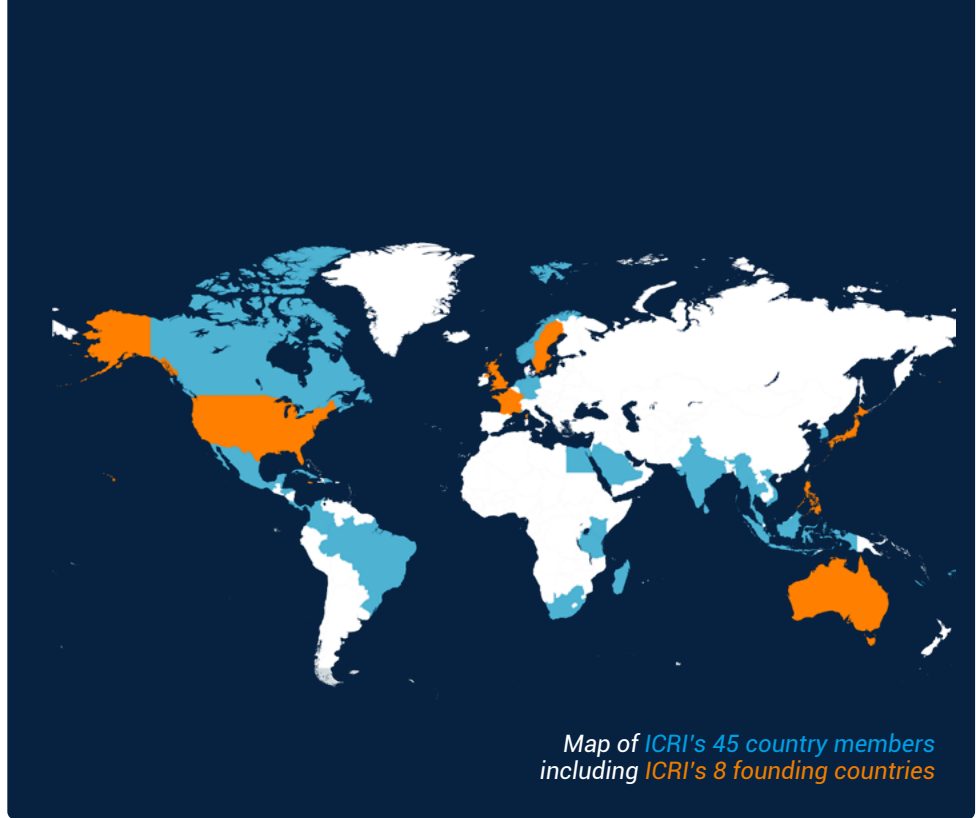
By engaging these communities, ICRI aims to create a collaborative network that fosters the exchange of knowledge and encourages the active participation of underrepresented voices in decision-making processes related to reef management. ICRI will continue to incorporate diverse voices into its actions and welcome youth and ILK holders at the next general meeting.



Listening session participants

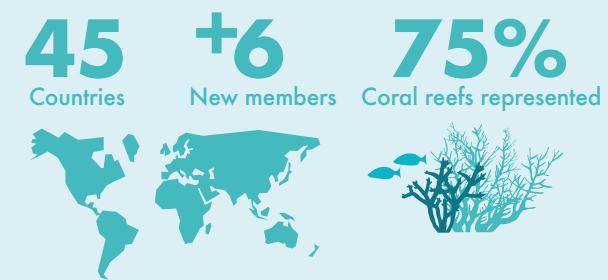
2023 IN NUMBERS

ICRI fosters partnerships and collaboration among governments, non-governmental organisations, international governmental organisations, research institutions, and other stakeholders to enhance knowledge generation and bridge existing knowledge gaps surrounding coral reef conservation and sustainable management practices. Safeguarding coral reefs can only be achieved through collective action.



© Katarina Katopis

101 ICRI members



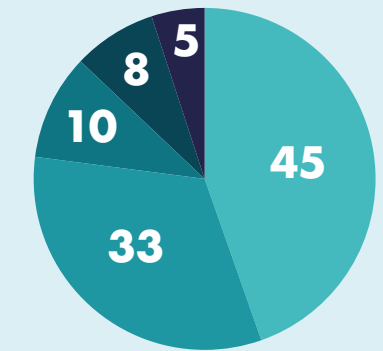
3 New partnerships

Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA)
Ocean & Climate Platform
Technical Partner with the NBSAP Forums

4 Regional GCRMN workshops

24 International events attended and/or supported

ICRI members 2023



- Country**
45 Members custodians to 75% of worlds coral reefs
- Non-governmental organisation**
33
- Regional intergovernmental organisation or regional sea**
10
- Global inter governmental organisation or multilateral environment agreement**
8
- Private industry, compagny or foundation**
5

14 Awareness videos

Jason Momoa
Ellie Goulding
The Coral Reef Breakthrough
Ask the Expert Series
GCRMN Pacific Report Workshop

10,662 Followers

5k LinkedIn
5662 X-Twitter

11 Newsletters Newsflashes

55 News articles

37TH GENERAL MEETING

The 37th General Meeting, the second of the United States of America's third tenure chairing ICRI, brought together members from around the world face-to-face for the first time since the 34th General Meeting in Townsville (Australia) in 2019 to discuss the achievements of ICRI and its members, share knowledge and experiences, and drive the implementation of the 2021 – 2024 Plan of Action. Over 80 participants from 40 ICRI members gathered to take part in the rich discussions.

“We are all connected by the problem, but hopefully connected by the solution”
– Ana Paula Prates, Director, Brazilian Ministry of the Environment

The meeting also set a precedence for future meetings, hosting the first ICRI Listening Session with Indigenous peoples and Local Community representatives and ICRI's first Youth Delegation were welcomed.

OVER 80 PARTICIPANTS FROM 40 ICRI MEMBERS

LAUNCH OF THE CORAL REEF BREAKTHROUGH

- 6 NEW MEMBERS
- Arizona State University
 - The Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform (CORDAP)
 - Coral Restoration Foundation (CRF)
 - MSC Foundation
 - SECORE International
 - Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute (SDMRI)

- 2 AD HOC COMMITTEES (AHC)
- New ahc on integrating coral reefs into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
 - Extension of the Reef Restoration ahc

1 LISTENING SESSION TO BROADEN THE CORAL REEF COMMUNITY AND THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TRADITIONAL OWNERS

1 YOUTH PANEL TO INTEGRATE YOUTH PERSPECTIVES INTO ICRI ACTIONS



ICRI Youth Delegation



ICRI new members



ICRI 37th General Meeting

THE CORAL REEF BREAKTHROUGH

The world has lost 14 percent of the coral on its coral reefs since 2009 (*Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020*) and with ever-increasing pressures from climate change, the window for protecting these ecosystems is closing rapidly. Recognising the lack of coral reef-specific global targets, ICRI convened and chaired a working group to develop the text of the Breakthrough of over 30 lead coral reef experts, in partnership with the GFCR and the High-Level Climate Champions (HLCC). This ensured the targets were grounded in science, actionable and measurable.

The Coral Reef Breakthrough aims to secure the future of at least **125,000 km2** of shallow-water tropical coral reefs with investments of at least **US\$12 billion** to support the resilience of more than half a billion people globally by 2030. The Breakthrough is supported by four key Action Points:

- ACTION POINT 1** | Stop drivers of loss
- ACTION POINT 2** | Double the area of coral reefs under effective protection
- ACTION POINT 3** | Accelerate Restoration
- ACTION POINT 4** | Secure investments of at least USD 12 billion by 2030 from public and private sources to conserve and restore these crucial ecosystems

“Support for Coral Reef Breakthrough is support for the well-being of generations to come”
– Ambassador Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean

At COP28, representatives of the GFCR Coalition announced the mobilisation of **more than \$200 million USD** as an initial direct investment toward the Coral Reef Breakthrough targets to scale conservation solutions. In addition, the United Kingdom was the first country to officially endorse the Breakthrough.

Moving forward, ICRI will continue to build on the existing momentum of the Breakthrough, generating global endorsements and positive coral reef action whilst effectively raising awareness on the plight of coral reefs, showcasing the actions currently being implemented, and the solutions to prevent their functional extinction.

Stay updated on the Coral Reef Breakthrough:
www.coralbreakthrough.org



A large poster titled 'The Coral Reef Breakthrough' with the subtitle 'An urgent call to action for 25% of life in our ocean'. The background is an underwater scene with coral and fish. At the bottom, there are logos for ICRI, the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, the United States Department of State, and the Race to Resilience. A QR code is on the right side, with the text 'Download the Coral Reef Breakthrough' below it. The website 'coralbreakthrough.org' is also visible.

ICRI SUPPORTERS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None of ICRI's achievements would have been possible without the support of its members, collaborators and partners. The unwavering commitment to the ICRI mission is what drives us forward, whose contributions make a significant impact on **safeguarding coral reefs** and their **associated ecosystems**.

ICRI remains committed to ensuring the continued implementation of the **ICRI Plan of Action 2021 – 2024: Turning the Tide for Coral Reefs** including positioning coral reefs at the forefront of discussion within the **International Agenda**, advocating for coral reefs, and building momentum, key to catalyse partnerships and to drive positive change in the lead up to the 2025 UN Ocean Conference and on the road to 2030 and raising **awareness** on the **importance** and **threats** of coral reefs.

As a supporting partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, ICRI is taking part in the regular all partner online event, in addition to contribution to the 3 task forces.

ICRI would like to acknowledge the support from the Principality of Monaco, Government of Sweden, United Nations Environment Programme, NOAA and The United States of America for their support. With special thanks to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the Reef World Foundation.



ICRI PARTNERSHIPS



ICRI strengthened its current partnership with several organisations including the global Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform (CORDAP), by welcoming them as a new ICRI member and maintaining its active role as a member of the Initiative Governing Committee.

ICRI also worked closely with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including the Regional Seas Programme.

ICRI continued to co-chair the UN Community of Ocean Action (COA) on Coral Reefs. The Community of Ocean Action aims to support its members in implementing their coral reef-related voluntary commitments by exchanging progress reports, experiences, lessons learned and good practices. ICRI represented the Community at the 2023 workshop, From Lisbon to Nice: Implementing SDG 14 with the Communities of Ocean Action.



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ICRI HISTORY

Purpose

ICRI emerged out of the recognition that coral reefs and related ecosystems found in tropical and sub-tropical regions are facing serious degradation, primarily due to acute and chronic anthropogenic stresses. Many nations face similar threats to natural resources and ecosystem services as well as similar management problems. Recognising this, ICRI's objectives are to:

- Encourage the adoption of best practice in sustainable management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems,
- build capacity amongst stakeholders, managers, and governments,
- and raise awareness at all levels on the plight of coral reefs around the world.

Mission

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is a partnership between Nations and organisations which strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world.

Although the Initiative's decisions are not binding on its members, its actions have been pivotal in continuing to highlight globally the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to environmental sustainability, food security and social and cultural wellbeing. The work of ICRI is regularly acknowledged in United Nations documents, highlighting the Initiative's important cooperation, collaboration, and advocacy role within the international arena.

The Initiative was founded in 1994 by eight governments: Australia, France, Japan, Jamaica, the Philippines, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. It was announced at the First Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 1994.



Learn more about ICRI:
www.icriforum.org



Follow us on X-Twitter:
[@ICRI_Coral_Reef](https://twitter.com/ICRI_Coral_Reef)



Follow us on LinkedIn:
[International Coral Reef Initiative \(ICRI\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/international-coral-reef-initiative/)



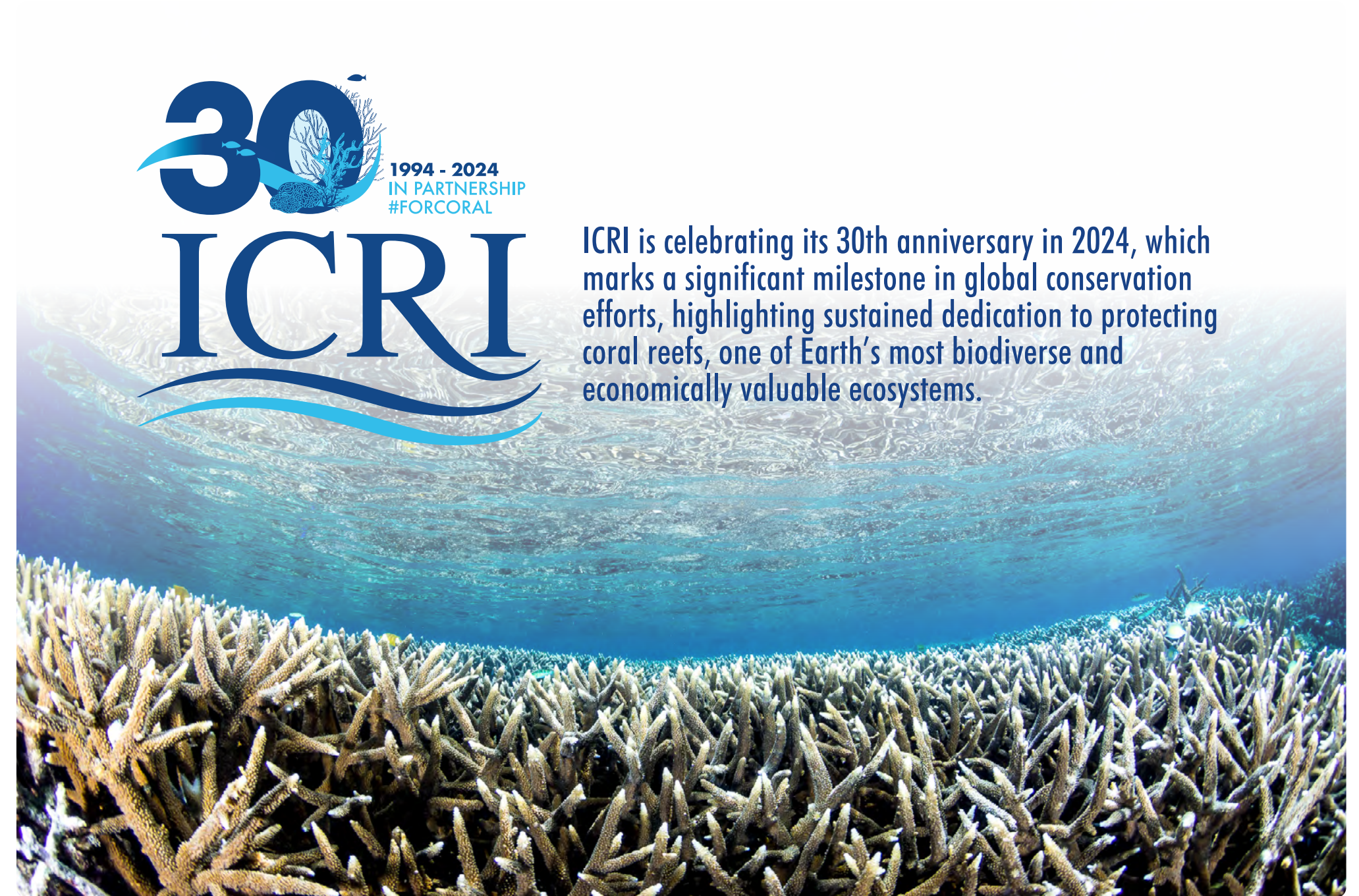
Youtube channel:
[@ICRI](https://www.youtube.com/@ICRI)



Join the conversation:
[#ForCoral](https://twitter.com/ForCoral)



Register for the ICRI Newsletter:
<https://www.icriforum.org/newsletters>



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ICRI is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, which marks a significant milestone in global conservation efforts, highlighting sustained dedication to protecting coral reefs, one of Earth's most biodiverse and economically valuable ecosystems.



INTERNATIONAL
CORAL REEF INITIATIVE

IMPACT REPORT 2023

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