

Resolution for the Red Sea Region

Adopted at the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) 38th General Meeting (Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) on September 12th 2024

Submitted as an outcome of the Coral Reef Red Sea Forum

Acknowledging the Red Sea Region as a critical biodiversity hotspot, home to immense biologically diverse coral reef communities, harboring 12,696 km² of the world's coral reefs, and more than 265 species of corals;

Acknowledging coral reefs of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba represent an important open sky laboratory to investigate coral resilience to climate change that could provide insights into potential solutions for the coral reefs of the world in the event of future coral losses caused by climate change;

Aware that the coral reefs of the Red Sea not only sustain a rapidly growing population of over 28 million people living along its coastline but also support local economies through fisheries, tourism, and coastal protection;

Deeply concerned by the increasing frequency and severity of coral bleaching events, with the Fourth Global Bleaching Event confirmed in at least 71 countries and territories, with 73% of coral reefs worldwide experiencing bleaching-level heat stress, and the mounting pressures on coral reefs from climate change, unsustainable extraction and land, and marine, sources of pollution;

Emphasising the urgent need to enhance coral reef resilience against climate change and local drivers of loss, through effective conservation, protection, and restoration efforts;

Recognising the Red Sea as a potential climate refuge for coral reefs, offering hope for the future preservation of coral species, biodiversity, and the ecosystems they support;

The General Meeting of the International Coral Reef Initiative:

Acknowledges with deep appreciation the hosting by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the General Organization for Conservation of Coral Reefs and Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS) of the "Red Sea Region – A Climate Refuge for Coral Reefs Red Sea" Forum on the occasion of 38th ICRI General Meeting, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Recognises the need for robust regional collaboration amongst all the relevant stakeholders to collect, collate and share coral reef monitoring data to drive a better understanding of the health of coral reefs in the region;

Recognises the need to expand the coverage of marine and coastal protected areas, and enhance the management of such environments, to achieve regional and global 30 by 30 targets;

Recognises the need to develop regional capacity across all levels to effectively conserve, protect, and restore coral reefs;

Recognises the need to develop and implement national strategies and action plans that include coral reefs and related ecosystems in all coral reef nations;

Recognises the high economic value of coral reefs for the region;

Recognises the importance of citizen science to collect meaningful information from marine ecosystems, which not only provides useful scientific data that may inform for conservation and management but has a range of additional conservation benefits such as science education, increasing ocean literacy, capacity building, community, and private industry;

Recognises the need for increased support for local communities to ensure sustainable practices and economic diversification that reduce pressures on coral reef ecosystems.

ICRI Members are encouraged, as a matter of urgency, to:

1. **Consider** the actions, information and proposals noted in the report, and the outputs of the “Red Sea Region – A Climate Refuge for Coral Reefs” Forum;
2. **Enhance and strengthen** regional cooperation in the Red Sea Region;
3. **Support** the collation, monitoring and sharing of national and regional coral reef data;
4. **Share** best practices for conservation;
5. **Promote** effective management strategies for coral reefs, and their associated ecosystems, and the expansion of the total area of coral reefs in the region under effective protection;
6. **Call for** the development and implementation of national coral reef strategies and action plans for all the countries in the region.