



International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

Member's Report | 38th General Meeting

9 – 13 September 2024 Jeddah, – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Reporting Period: 2023 & 2024

A. Member Information:

- Name of ICRI member: [The European Union](#)
- Name of person(s) completing member's report: [Bénédicte Caremier](#)
- Position/Title: [Senior expert International Ocean Governance](#)
- Email: benedicte.caremier@ec.europa.eu
- Are you a designated ICRI Focal Point: **Yes** No
 - If no, please indicate who you are completing the form on behalf of:
- Which was the last General Meeting you attended: [2021](#)
- Will you be attending the 38th ICRI General Meeting in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Yes **No - The EU will likely be represented by the EU Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**
- Member social media:
 - Twitter/X: [@EU_MARE](#)
 - ~~LinkedIn:~~
 - Facebook: [@EUmaritimefish](#)
 - Instagram: [@ourocean_eu](#)
 - Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/@ourocean_eu

DISCLAIMER: This is a consolidated report of the contributions received from some EU Delegations and services across the European Commission. This is a high-level summary that is not intended to be exhaustive.

B. Reporting on the implementation of the ICRI Plan of Action 2021-2024: turning the tide for coral reefs. *Your responses will help inform the Secretariat about members' contributions toward the current Plan of Action. You can download the ICRI Plan of Action here: <https://icriforum.org/documents/plan-of-action-2021-2024/>*

What are the main contributions you, as an ICRI member, have made to the ICRI Plan of Action?

Theme 1 - Preparing for the Future: Promoting Resilient Coral Reefs

Theme 2 - Coral Reef Science and Oceanography: Advancing and Utilizing the Latest Science and Technology

Theme 3 - Local Threat Reduction: Integrating Response Planning Frameworks

Theme 4 - Diversity and Inclusion: Expanding the Coral Reef Community

During the reporting period, we contributed to Themes 1 and 2

Under Theme 1, the following initiatives are worth being mentioned:

- 1. **The Pacific BioScapes Programme** (EUR 12 million). It addresses critical issues concerning coastal and marine biodiversity, and ecosystem-based responses to climate change adaptation, through 30 activities implemented in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. The Programme applies a ridge-to-reef approach to include both marine and terrestrial environments and addresses barriers to effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The activities include marine spatial planning in the Cook Islands and Kiribati, climate-smart ecosystem-based management in Fiji, management of coral reef fisheries and resilience of coral reef ecosystems in the Marshall Islands, integrated island and ocean management in the Central Province in Solomon Islands, and capacity building for the Palau protected areas network. Most of these activities are at the beginning of the implementation phase. Some have not started yet. The outcomes so far are: support to one Pacific Island country to adopt marine spatial plan and to 8 Pacific Island countries to assess, conserve, protect, manage and sustainable use marine and terrestrial biodiversity.*
- 2. Under the Kiwa initiative, the **MiCoast Project** started in 2023 and is implemented by OneReef WorldWide Stewardship. The project addresses the challenges of community-based fisheries management in Micronesia, by applying nature -based solutions, such as management / protection of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems and restoration / rehabilitation of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems. The project is in its initial stage of implementation. More information [MiCOAST, Micronesian Community-based Fisheries Management as a Nature-based Solution for COASTal Resilience - Kiwa Initiative](#)*
- 3. With funding from the EU's Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+) Initiative, the IUCN Oceania Regional Office supported the **Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in Samoa by implementing a national-scale Marine Spatial Plan**. The project was implemented from 01 January 2019 to 30 June 2023 with a funding of EUR 1.2 million. Among others it developed a draft marine spatial plan through a participatory, integrated and holistic approach to managing and promoting the sustainable use of Samoa's marine resources. The final MSP is yet to be endorsed at national level.*

4. *In August 2024, the European Commission adopted a **regional ocean programme for the Pacific region** with a budget of EUR 20 million. The programme will cover 13 island countries. One of its objectives is to increase the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems.*
5. *Under the project “**Increasing Coral Reef Resilience with Assisted Evolution via Selective Restoration**” in the **Cayman Islands**, the Resilience, Sustainable Energy and Marine Biodiversity Programme (RESEMBID) supports the Central Caribbean Marine Institute to rebuild ecosystem complexity through assisted evolution via selective restoration with stress (heat and disease) tolerant corals. EU funding: EUR 257 950. (see the 2021-2023 EU reporting for more information)*
6. *Under the project “**Turning the tide: maintaining economic resilience on Aruba through hands-on restoration and conservation of its marine biodiversity**” in Aruba (EU funding: EUR 713 000), RESEMBID is supporting Stichting Wageningen Research, Wageningen Environmental Research (WENR) and its partners to kick-start hands-on rehabilitation of Aruba’s spatially linked coral reefs and mangroves. The project will also develop a scientifically sound marine monitoring and research program, aimed at enabling MPA managers and policy makers to make evidence-based decisions. (see the 2021-2023 EU reporting for more information)*

Under Theme 2:

- *The **Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme** supports the development of capacity for management and governance of protected and conserved areas including the marine protected areas. The programme also supported the development of Regional Observatory for Protected Areas and Biodiversity, which is hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).*
- *See Section D below*
 - (ICRI) What are your upcoming priorities for coral reefs?

Under the Horizon Europe Research programme, the biodiversity and ecosystem functioning, including marine and coastal environment, will remain a priority in the 2025 Work Programme. The EU is considering a dedicated research topic on corals (to be confirmed).

C. Reporting on the Restoration of Coral Reefs *(Target 2 GBF/Action Point 3 Coral Reef Breakthrough)*

- (ICRI) Are you able to estimate the total area (km²) of coral reef under active restoration and the total area you consider to be ‘restored’, as a result of your organisation/country’s in 2023?
 - Total area under active restoration in 2023: km²
 - Total area considered to be restored in 2023: km²
- (ICRI) If available, please provide further information on the total area considered to be restored, and under active restoration for the total period of the restoration programme, including the timeframe:

We do not have a total number. But, in the Caribbean context, the EU supported the restoration of several sites. In 2023, 410m² (60 m² of the pyramid-form MOSES structures and 350 m² of rebar star-shaped MARRS structures) were introduced on specific and suitable sites where only coral rubble was present as an indication where previous coral structures were completely lost. The areas of intervention already show sign of full restorative potential through introducing structures and coral fragments to kick-start natural restorative power. The coral fragments are already latching on to the structures and showing signs of growth. Other biodiversity has already been observed to be attracted by the structures.

- (ICRI) For the purpose of the above, please provide definitions for how your programme/organisation/country considers coral reefs to be:
 - A) Under active restoration
 - B) Restored

Under active Restoration:

Under the “Turning the tide” project in Aruba, funded through RESEMBID, the definition is as per the Aruba Conservation Foundation: “Intervention sites, where structures and fragments are placed and maintained, and coral monitoring is executed on a structural basis for the coming years.”

Restored:

Under the “Turning the tide” project in Aruba, funded through RESEMBID, the definition is as per the Aruba Conservation Foundation: “Intervention sites and/or adjacent reefs have fully functional and resilient ecosystems and biodiversity.”

Does your country have any restoration policies or regulations?

Many locations have outdated and insufficient regulations for coral reef restoration, resulting in inadequate oversight of restoration efforts. In addition, the absence, limitations, or differences among regulations between countries prevents the development and implementation of effective regional coral reef conservation strategies.

- (ICRI) Please describe the restoration policies or regulations (if any) that are in place in your country.

In June 2024, the EU Member States adopted the Nature Restoration Law. It aims to restore ecosystems, habitats and species across the EU’s land and sea areas to: a) ensure the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient nature, b) contribute to the EU’s climate mitigation and climate adaptation objectives, and c) meet international commitments. It includes specific targets. One of them is about marine ecosystems – restoring marine habitats that delivers significant benefits, including for climate change mitigation, and restoring the habitats of iconic marine species.

The Regulation entered into force on 18 August 2024.

More information is available [The EU #NatureRestoration Law \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/2024/04/pdf/24040401_en.pdf)

D. The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)

The production of future GCRMN reports, both at the regional and global level, relies on the ongoing support of data contributors who are willing to share their coral reef monitoring data for this purpose. As such, from 2024 to 2026, the GCRMN will undertake the rigorous process of developing the **Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025** global report, including an extensive data collation process.

Do you have data to contribute to the upcoming GCRMN global report?

The European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) is a network of organisations supported by the European Union. More information on [Home | European Marine Observation and Data Network \(EMODnet\) \(europa.eu\)](#) and in the EU 2021-2023 reporting.

EMODnet includes data on:

a) Coralligenous and other calcareous bio-concretions in the Mediterranean (points and polygons 2023) – the current known extent and distribution, data collated by EMODnet Seabed Habitats. The purpose was to produce a data product that would provide the best compilation of evidence for this habitat. However, this data product contains large data gaps and should be viewed as incomplete.

*b) Live hard coral cover (Essential Ocean Variable) in Europe - points and polygons - the current known extent and distribution data, collated by EMODnet Seabed Habitats, was updated in 2023. The *Lophelia pertusa* and Coral gardens are both on the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats. The purpose was to produce a data product that would provide the best compilation of evidence for the essential ocean variable (EOV) known as Hard coral cover and composition (sub-variable: Live hard coral cover and extent), as defined by the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS). The geographic extent of this product was extended in 2023 to include jurisdictional waters (including continental shelf and claimed extended continental shelf) of EU Member States, the United Kingdom and Norway including areas in the Caribbean Sea. This data product should be considered a work in progress.*

The data can be assessed directly through [Home | European Marine Observation and Data Network \(EMODnet\) \(europa.eu\)](#) including information on metadata, standards and data providers.

In the context of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the EU implemented a red coral research programme. The GFCM Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) database facilitates the analysis of all known VME indicator records (including absence data) in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. It is regularly updated (January every year) with all available data from scientific surveys, monitoring activities and commercial fisheries regarding observations on habitats/species sensitive to specific fishing activities. The red coral research programme ended in 2023 but the VMS database is ongoing. It includes cold water coral reefs and deep-sea sponge aggregations. More information on [GFCM database on sensitive benthic habitats and species | General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - GFCM | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](#)

- Please provide the contact information for the data providers to allow for the GCRMN data collation team to request data and discuss the process of data contribution.

Please add further contacts as needed.

For EMODNET Seabed Habitats

Contact Name: Ville Karvinen (coordinator)
Organisation: Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) Finland
Email Address: Ville.Karvinen@syke.fi

Contact Name:
Organisation:
Email Address:

E. Capacity Building & Communications

Have you found the ICRI #ForCoral Webinar Series useful?

Through 2024, ICRI has hosted multiple webinars that aim to share knowledge and foster collaboration across critical topics concerning the conservation, protection, and restoration of coral reefs. These webinars form the #ForCoral webinar series, and topics include the 4th Global Bleaching Event, impacts of land-based sources of pollution and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

The full list of webinars and recordings can be found here: <https://icriforum.org/forcoral-webinar-series/>

- (ICRI) Did you attend any of the series' webinars, and if so which topics have you found the most useful and engaging? If you did not attend the webinars, please explain why, and how what we could have done better.

We could not attend any of them due to other commitments. However, the recordings provide much useful information.

- (ICRI) Do you have any suggestions or request for topics that you wish for ICRI to host as part of this series? If you have a specific topic in mind, and would like to host a webinar, please indicate below.

no

Have you found the ICRI communications useful?

- (ICRI) Do you find the ICRI Monthly Round of News Useful? If yes, what do you like about it and how would you suggest improving ICRI's communications?

Very useful to stay in contact with the ICRI community, be informed of key events and progress made in relation to coral reefs.

F. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

ICRI has continually supported the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Post-2020 process, developing a recommendation for coral reef indicators to be included in the Global Biodiversity Framework and supporting Parties during the negotiation process. Following the Framework's adoption in 2022, ICRI's support now aims to support parties in implementing the framework, especially through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPS) and the Marine and Coastal Work Programme.

In 2024, ICRI released [A Guide for Integrating Coral Reefs and Associated Ecosystems into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans](#) to support coral reef countries to integrate coral reefs and associated ecosystems into their NBSAPs.

- (ICRI) Did you use read, use, and/or apply the Guide on integrating coral reefs and associated ecosystems into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) useful? *Where possible, indicate specific elements that were useful or alternatively provide information if you did not find the guide useful.*

The Guide was read and sent to relevant European Commission services for their information and possible use.

- (ICRI) Did you revise your current National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) to include coral reefs? *N.B. if you are not a country representative, are you working with national focal points to help update their NBSAPs? Please provide further details.*

*The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 covers all ecosystems but does not mention coral reefs explicitly. There is no plan to amend it.
We are not in contact with national focal points.*

- (ICRI) How are you planning to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? Please list the target(s) and decisions that your work attributes to.

*The EU **Marine Action Plan** adopted by the European Commission in February 2023, under the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, aims, inter alia, at accelerating the implementation of the relevant EU legislation and policies to reduce the impacts of fisheries on sensitive species and sensitive habitats. This is of relevance to the seabed habitats that are in unfavourable conservation status, this potentially also coral beds.
More information on: [Action plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)*

*In line with the objectives of the **EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)**, and the newly adopted EU Nature Restoration Law (see Section C above), the seabed must be protected and restored in EU waters.*

*Under the MSFD, EU Member States have developed EU wide **criteria** in terms of threshold values for seabed integrity (limitation of seabed damage and seabed loss), indicative of the Good Environmental Status of waters. These new criteria for seabed protection apply to all marine seabed habitats at a broad level. They are important to help EU Member States ensure a healthier and more sustainable use of the ocean and seas. They are a deliverable of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy and Marine Action Plan.*

The EU Nature Restoration Law (see Section C) requires EU Member States to put in place effective restoration measures to cover at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 and for all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. It sets specific legally binding targets and obligations in each of the listed ecosystems, including marine (seagrass, sponge and coral beds for example). EU Member States must plan ahead and submit national restoration plans to the European Commission by mid-2026. These plans should define the restoration measures required to meet the binding targets and specify the total area to be restored, as well as a timeline.

G. Upcoming events

Please tick the most any events that you will be, or are planning to attend:

- September 10th – 24th: 79th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 79)
- September 23rd – 26th: GEF International Waters Conference
- October 13th – 18th: 7th International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC7)
- October 21st – November 1st: CBD COP16
- November 4th – 8th: 77th Annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI77)
- December 10th – 12th: The International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference
- December 9th – 13th: Reef Futures
- June 9th – 13th 2025: United Nations Ocean Conference
- October 9th – 15th 2025: IUCN World Conservation Congress
- Other

Please list any upcoming regional / international events relevant to ICRI that your organisation plans to attend:

H. Publications. Please list relevant publications / reports you have released recently (+ add a link if possible)

Publication	URL
Blue carbon for biodiversity and climate action - A projects info pack (July 2024)	Blue carbon for biodiversity and climate action - A projects info pack by CORDIS - European Commission (europa.eu).

I. ICRI Member Feedback. What do you find most valuable about being a member of ICRI as well as completing the ICRI member reports? If you have any ideas to improve the Member Reports, please list below:

Being an ICRI member is helpful to benefit from the other members' insight and experience, define common positions ahead of international negotiations and possibly join forces through joint projects/initiatives.

Completing the member reports is helpful for taking stock on ongoing activities, assessing the outcomes of past projects and tracking progress of the Plan implementation among ICRI members.

J. Contact information & member information. (Note that this information will be posted on the ICRI website on your member page: <https://icriforum.org/members/>).

Please use the table below to provide us updates to your member's focal points as well as the blank cells to indicate changes to information (please add more rows, as needed):

Focal Point 1:	
Name:	Bénédicte Caremier
Title/Organisation:	European Commission
Email:	Benedicte.caremier@ec.europa.eu
Focal Point 2:	
Name:	
Title/Organisation:	
Email:	
Member page updates:	
Section	Update

Thank you very much for sharing your valuable experiences and information with ICRI. Members reports, meeting outputs and resources will be uploaded to: <https://icriforum.org/events/37th-icri-general-meeting/>