

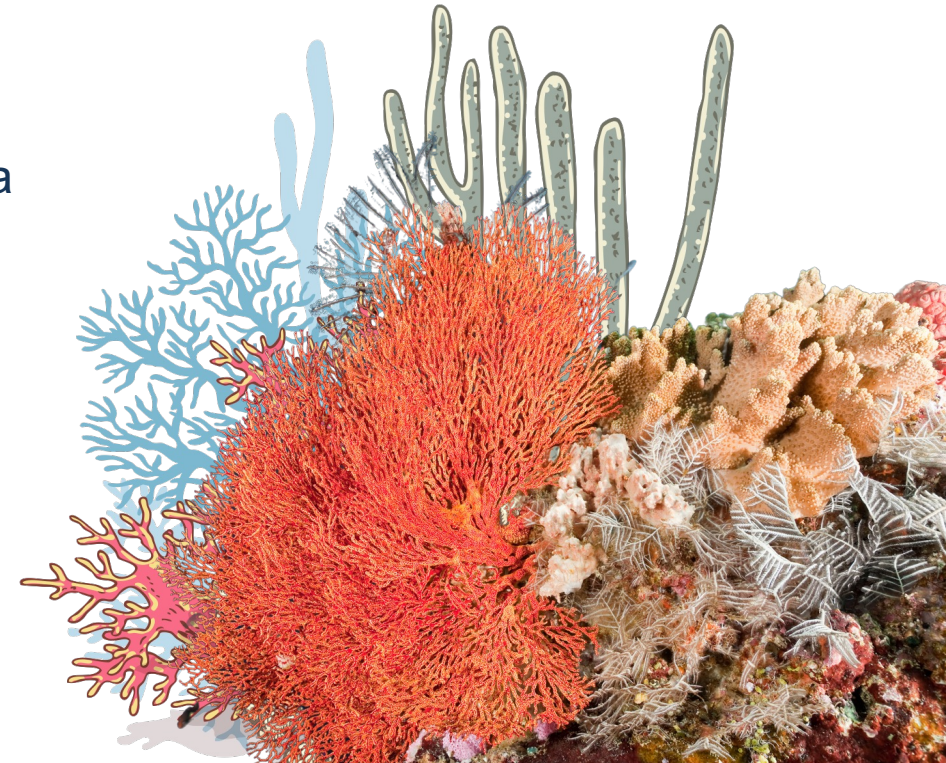
# PROPOSAL TO HOST THE ICRI SECRETARIAT **38<sup>th</sup> ICRI GENERAL MEETING**

**The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

The General Organization for the Conservation of Coral Reefs and Sea Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS)

**12<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**Dr Abdulaziz Alsuwailem, Chief Conservation & Strategy Officer**



**The Red Sea is unique** and home to a spectacular, biodiverse, complex, connected set of ecosystems including coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, algal beds, and deeper water ecosystems.

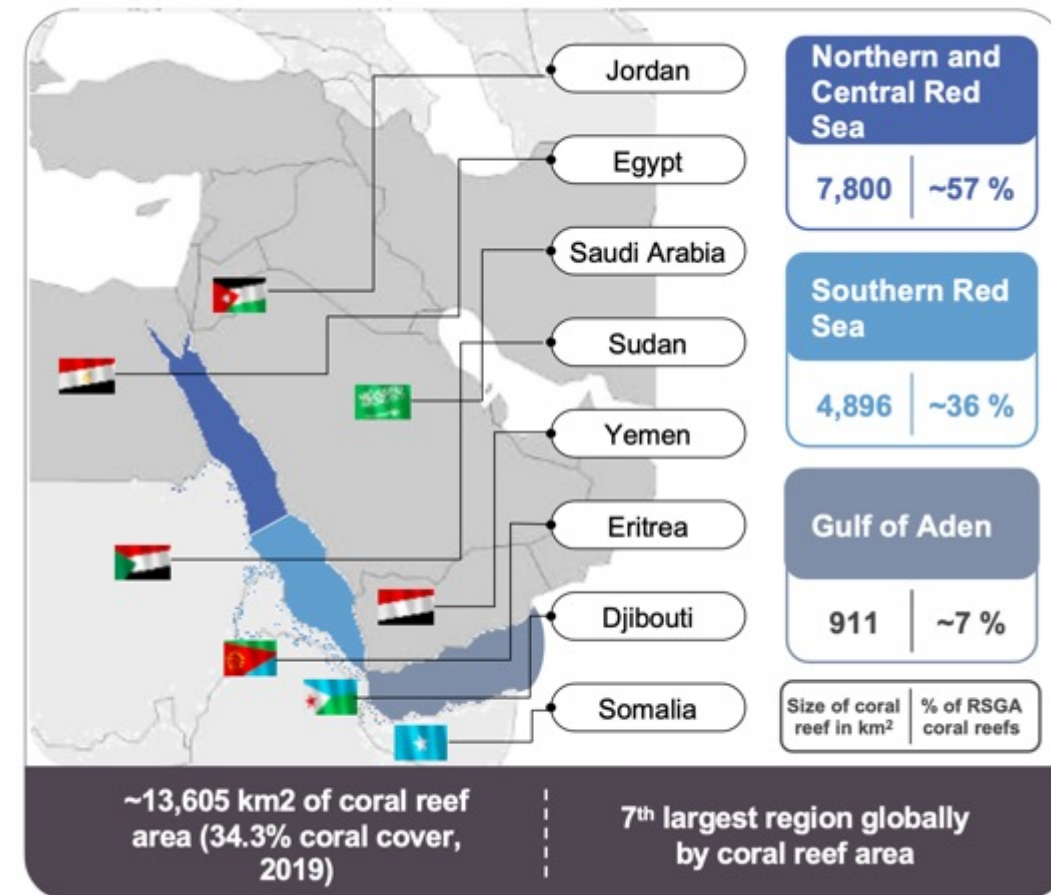


**The challenge** to protect and restore the health and resilience of Red Sea coral reefs and their associated ecosystems into the future requires strong national action on climate change and the immediate and effective implementation of resilience-based management priorities.

# CORAL REEFS IN THE RED SEA & GULF OF ADEN

## THE 7TH LARGEST REGION OF CORAL COVER

- The most biologically diverse coral reef communities outside of Southeast Asia's coral triangle.
- **10%** of coral reef species are endemic – a critical repository for marine biodiversity in the world.
- Coral reefs in the region cover **13,605 km<sup>2</sup>** (34.3% coral cover, 2019)
- **5.3%** of the total global area of coral reefs.
- USD **\$6 billion** in coral associated tourism annually
- Potential repository of thermal-tolerance and high resiliency

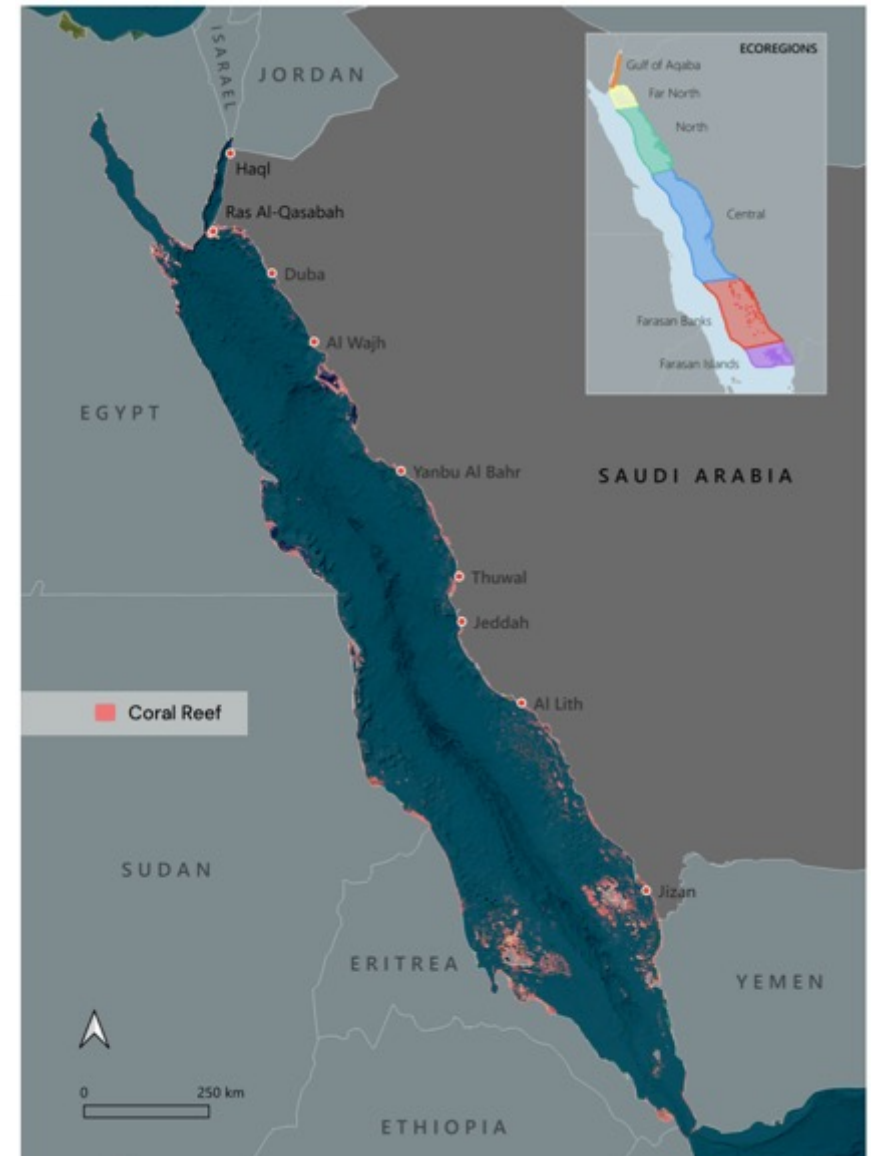




# CORAL REEFS IN SAUDI ARABIA

## A CRITICAL AREA FOR CORAL REEFS

- **5,927 km<sup>2</sup>** of coral reef, the 9<sup>th</sup> largest coral community globally
- Represents **44%** of the Red Sea region's total coral cover
- Coral cover was **highest in the most northerly ecoregion** (incl. the Gulf of Aqaba)
- Yet, condition of coral reefs and associated ecosystems is **highly variable across the region**
- SHAMS tasked with the overall responsibility for the conservation of coral reefs and sea turtles in the Red Sea under the jurisdiction of Saudi Arabia



# SAUDI ARABIA'S NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

## MANAGING CORAL REEFS

- Saudi Arabia has a comprehensive legal framework to protect its coral reefs; primarily by the national **Environment Law**
- This framework covers protected areas, pollution prevention, and biodiversity.
- The Kingdom has also committed to combatting climate change (COP28), and protecting biodiversity (CBD GBF) and has ambitious goals set out through;
  - **Vision 2030**
  - **Saudi Green Initiative**
  - **the Middle East Initiative (MGI)**, and
  - **the National Environmental Strategy**



The Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform – CORDAP – was launched in 2020 by the **G20**, under the presidency of Saudi Arabia, to fast-track research and development solutions to save the world's corals.

# SAUDI VISION 2030

## A VIBRANT SOCIETY

- Promoting culture & entertainment
- Achieving environmental sustainability
- Living healthy, being healthy



## A THRIVING ECONOMY

- Launching our promising sectors
- Integrating regionally and internationally




## AN AMBITIOUS NATION


- Protecting our vital resources
- Being responsible to society





# KEY CONSERVATION PLAYERS


A COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT APPROACH


 **NEOM**


 **PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN ROYAL RESERVE**  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

 **Amaala**

 **Red Sea Global**

 **Red Sea Project**

 **Imam Faisal bin Turki Royal Reserve**  
Development Authority

 **Farasan Islands**  
المركز الوطني  
لتنمية الحياة الفطرية  
National Center for Wildlife



المركز الوطني  
للمراقبة على الالتزام البيئي  
National Center for Environmental Compliance  
المملكة العربية السعودية



المركز الوطني  
لتنمية الحياة الفطرية  
National Center for Wildlife  
المملكة العربية السعودية



الهيئة السعودية للبحر الأحمر  
Saudi Red Sea Authority



البرنامج الوطني لتطوير  
قطاع الثروة السمكية  
National Fisheries Development Program



وزارة النقل  
TRANSPORT MINISTRY



موانئ  
MAWANI  
الهيئة العامة للموانئ  
SAUDI PORTS AUTHORITY



وزارة السياحة  
Ministry of Tourism  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



KAUST



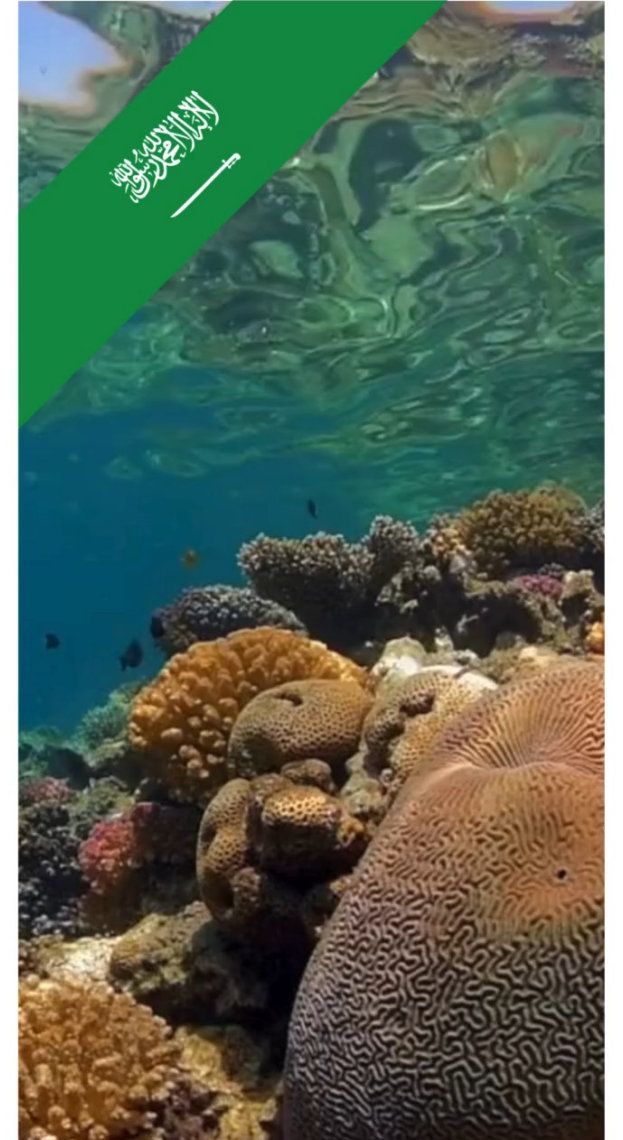


SHAMS is a distinguished Saudi government organization operating under the authority of the Council of Ministers Resolution No. (250) dated 04/25/1443 AH.

**Its mandate is to oversee the regulation, protection, development, and sustainability of coral reefs and turtles in the Red Sea.**

**SHAMS is committed to collaborating with local and international experts to drive forward-thinking initiatives aimed at monitoring, restoring, and rehabilitating these vital marine habitats.**

By harnessing innovative solutions, SHAMS strives to position Saudi Arabia as a global frontrunner in the realm of coral and sea turtle conservation.





# THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF SHAMS

①

Expand **scientific knowledge** on Red Sea coral reefs and sea turtles

②

Drive **science-based conservation** of coral reefs and sea turtles

③

Promote KSA's coral reefs and sea turtles as **national icons** and **boost sustainable enjoyment, awareness and expertise**

④

Build **partnerships** to elevate conservation outcomes and achieve **global recognition**

⑤

Establish **world-class capabilities** at SHAMS

# THE MANDATE OF SHAMS

**Develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives** related to the conservation, restoration and protection of the CR in the Red Sea

**Provide oversight to plans and initiatives** of other entities impacting CR

**Develop a comprehensive knowledge base** through baseline surveys and research efforts and **monitor the status** of CR; secure and gather needed info from relevant parties

**Restore** damaged coral reefs & **recover** sea turtle populations & **protect/ restore their habitats, develop emergency / rapid response plans** & coordinate with relevant entities

**Set mandate-relevant codes and regulations, and issue licenses and permits** for activities impacting CR

**Encourage investment and financing, and facilitate participation of non-state actors** (communities, private sector and NGOs)

Strive towards **raising awareness and public engagement, and regulating/ developing relevant professional capacity**

**Represent the Kingdom internationally** in scopes related to CR of the Red Sea

**SHAMS as the national entity for Red Sea CRST conservation, in coordination with stakeholders**



# At the national level, SHAMS aims to achieve exemplary conservation by adhering to 3 guiding principles

Ensure exemplary conservation of coral reefs and sea turtles in the Red Sea by adhering to a set of guiding principles

Be aligned with the **Vision 2030, National Environment Strategy** and the **Red Sea Sustainability Strategy** and support realization of KSA's **international environmental commitments**



Ensure holistic management of coral reefs (**One reef ecosystem**) and sea turtles, informed and guided by **ecological/ scientific considerations and best practices**



Adopt a **collaborative model** that is **inclusive** of all relevant players along the Red Sea and leverages their **capabilities** for **best-in-class conservation** of CR





# At the regional level, SHAMS will activate effective regional collaboration by leveraging existing or new platforms

## Regional Collaboration

*SHAMS will act as a catalyst for regional collaboration...*

*... leveraging various mechanisms*

### *Examples of regional collaboration actions*



**Establish joint CR conservation programs** for baselining and monitoring, and identify focus areas based on regional priorities



**Facilitate and benefit from knowledge sharing** on best practices and lessons learned



**Establish technical and financial assistance programs** to support conservation activities in the Red Sea

**Leverage existing regional platforms** (e.g., PERSGA, AASRSGA)

**Establish bi-lateral agreements** with neighboring countries

**Recommend new platforms** dedicated for CRST (*if needed*)

# At the global level, SHAMS aims to drive KSA's aspirations of exemplary conservation, innovation and collective action



**Drive collective global efforts and elevate KSA's standing as the main protagonist addressing grand challenges**

**Drive collaborative efforts for best-practice in the conservation and stewardship of CR**

**Position the Kingdom as a global supporter of CR conservation**



# SHAMS PROPOSAL TO HOST THE NEXT ICRI SECRETARIAT





The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will represent the first Secretariat to be hosted in the Middle East region.

**Hosting the Secretariat aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 by bolstering the nation's commitment to environmental sustainability, demonstrating a commitment to addressing global environmental challenges and enhancing its role as a leader in global conservation efforts.**

ICRI is a global constant in global coral reef conservation efforts, to which the Kingdom joined ICRI's membership in 2022; showcasing our commitment to preserving biodiversity.



# Aligned visions

## UNDERSCORING SAUDI ARABIA'S COMMITMENTS

1. Pioneering Global Leadership in Coral Reef Conservation

1. Strategic engagement and international showcasing

1. Advancing economic and environmental synergies

1. Capacity building, strategic partnerships and investments

1. Saudi Arabia's Gift to the World – a lasting legacy in coral reef conservation



*Implementing the ICRI Framework for Action*

**Integrated management** for coral reefs using through an ecosystem approach

To **build capacity** in all facets of management of coral reefs

**Support science and monitoring** to build knowledge on the status and trends of coral reefs

Engage in **assessments and review** to understand the impact and effectiveness of management

# Core Activities

## TIMELINE & ACTIVITIES

**Duration** Three (3) years

### Main Activities

1 Production of a Plan of Action (linking to the implementation of the Framework for Action and Call to Action) in collaboration with ICRI's membership

2 Organization of the **6th International Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management Symposia (ITMEMS)**

3 Strengthening the Red Sea region, building national, regional and global capacity

Maintain and continue to raise the stature of coral reefs within the International Agenda, notably;

4 Support the production of the **Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025**

5 Organisation of 3 General Meetings

6 Begin preparations for the **4th International Year of the Reef: 2028**

- United Nations Ocean Conference (June 2025)
- IUCN World Conservation Congress (October 2025)



# ICRI PLAN OF ACTION

**Vision** “Coral reefs and related ecosystems are used and managed in an ecologically sustainable manner to enhance their resilience and provide goods and services for generations to come.”

## Possible focus thematic

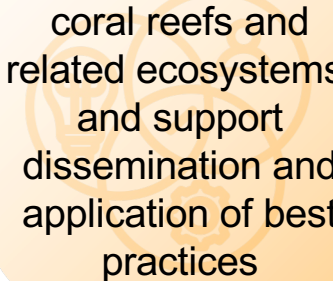
**Mainstream coral reefs into legal instruments and frameworks**  
(at national level) for their effective management



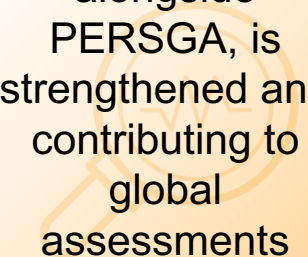
**Blue Economy and Coral Reefs**  
Support countries to integrate coral reefs into blue economy strategies (at the national and regional level)



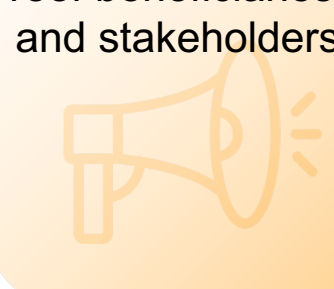
**Capacity Building**  
Build capacity in all facets of management of coral reefs and related ecosystems, and support dissemination and application of best practices



**Science & Monitoring**  
Red Sea regional GCRMN node, alongside PERSGA, is strengthened and contributing to global assessments



**Raising Awareness**  
on coral reefs among the public, reef beneficiaries, and stakeholders



# SECRETARIAT GOVERNANCE

The General Organization for the Conservation of Coral Reefs and Sea Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS), on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, will chair ICRI.

Dr Khaled Asfahani, Chief Executive Office, will be the chair of the Initiative, and Dr. Abdulaziz Alsuwailem as the co- chair

The Secretariat will continue to be hosted by the Designated Administrative Representative with the same core team supporting the implementation of the ICRI Plan of Action.

The Secretariat will benefit from the broad spectrum of expertise at SHAMS through the provision of administrative and technical support.





In Shams, we are dedicated to the noble cause of conserving coral reefs and sea turtles. Our goal is to establish a strong and reputable entity that excels in preserving these precious marine ecosystems. We aspire for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to be recognized as a global leader in coral reef and turtle conservation. To achieve this, we have devised comprehensive programs and projects that adhere to the best international practices and uphold the highest standards.

The vision, goals and objectives to conserve, protect and restore coral reefs, and their associated ecosystems, embodies that of ICRI and its membership. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is equipped, and ready, to chair and advance this global coalition for coral reefs.

Dr.Khaled Bin Mohammad Asfahani  
CEO



**SHUKRAN**  
**THANK YOU**