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INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF INITIATIVE

ICRI ONLINE MEETING – SESSION 1

ACCELERATING ACTION #FORCORAL

14th April 2025

09:00 EDT | 14:00 BST | 16:00 AST



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OPENING REMARKS



Dr. Khaled Asfahani

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



2025 – 2027 ICRI PLAN OF ACTION



icriforum.org

POLICY DRIVEN ACTION FOR CORAL REEFS



Margaux Monfared

ICRI Secretariat



POLICY DRIVEN ACTION FOR CORAL REEFS

Background

- ICRI plays a vital role in supporting the integration of coral reef conservation, protection and restoration into global, regional and national policies.
- The 2025 – 2027 chairmanship of the Secretariat coincides with the **midpoint of the 2030 agenda**, a pivotal opportunity to advance coral reef priorities within key environmental agreements and processes.
- The Plan of Action will contribute to achieving global goals and frameworks such as:
 - Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)
 - 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
 - Coral Reef Breakthrough
 - UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and UN Decade of Ocean Science
 - Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022 – 2025
- ICRI, with its diverse membership of governments, NGOs, the private sector, and local communities, is uniquely positioned to bridge gaps and foster collaboration across all sectors to drive the global implementation of international commitments and targets.



POLICY DRIVEN ACTION FOR CORAL REEFS

Illustrative Activities

- Engage with policymakers and negotiators before, during, and after major international meetings (e.g., UN Ocean Conference, CBD COP) to ensure coral reefs are part of the discussions, including the production of supporting documents where feasible.
- Organise consultations and discussions with key stakeholders to align coral reef priorities and create a common agenda for action across global, regional, national and local levels.
- Collaborate with regional organisations, including the UNEP Regional Seas programmes to embed coral reef conservation into broader regional frameworks.
- Provide guidance and support for establishing regional and national coral reef task forces and action plans, including sharing best practices and facilitating collaboration.



STRENGTHEN SCIENTIFIC MONITORING



Tom Dallison

ICRI Secretariat



STRENGTHEN SCIENTIFIC MONITORING

Background

- Coral reef monitoring offers the only opportunity to understand how reefs will continue to change, to connect patterns of change to the processes causing them to occur, and to create opportunities for management to best ensure their future.
- Effective management of coral reefs depends on access to high-quality, up-to-date data about their status, trends, and the pressures they face, to guide informed decisions and allocate resources efficiently.
- The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), an operational network of ICRI, is guided by its own Implementation & Governance Plan (IGP), and hosted at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).
- Established in 1995, 2025 marks 30 years of the GCRMN
- 6 global assessments of the world's reefs have been undertaken, alongside numerous regional reports. The latest being East Asia region, with Pacific and Caribbean reports to be released soon. Topical reports also produced.





STRENGTHEN SCIENTIFIC MONITORING

Illustrative Activities

- ICRI will support the GCRMN to produce the “Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025” report, its supplementary materials (including a Summary for Policy Makers), and dissemination, alongside supporting the release and promotion of regional reports.
- Support the implementation of the “2019 GCRMN Implementation and Governance Plan (IGP)”, including capacity development efforts, and support the host institution in updating the IGP for its continued relevance and effectiveness.
- Work with members and partners to strengthen collaboration within the Red Sea Region.
- Work with members to build capacity for the role of citizen science in coral reef monitoring programmes through training and workshops and explore the integration of monitoring of restoration efforts and sites into coral reef assessment.



ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF CORAL REEFS



Mohammed Ismail Elsayed

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



ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF CORAL REEFS

Background

Why measure the value of ecosystem services?

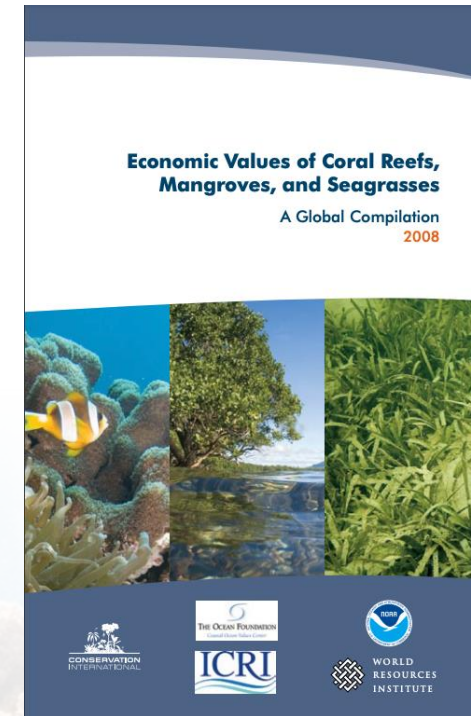
To help create an incentive for people to sustain the ecosystems and services they provide.

What ecosystem service values can we measure?

The changes in ecosystem services and their consequent impacts on human well-being.

The fact that coral reefs have tremendous value often seems to elude policy and decision makers. If these decision makers were more aware of the amount of capital that healthy reefs can bring to the economy in terms of tourism, fisheries, coastal protection and biodiversity, a more concerted and united management effort would be possible. Economic valuation can help to ensure that coral reefs are adequately taken into account in public decision-making and therefore secure necessary financial support.

- **Barrier 1:** Lack of knowledge on the true economic value of coral reefs hinders aligning conservation with financing mechanisms.
- **Barrier 2:** No unified method and a variety of figures in the literature.
- **Monetary Value:** Assigning a monetary value to these services helps prioritise reefs in national agendas and secure funding for their protection.



ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF CORAL REEFS

Illustrative Activities

- Establish an ad hoc committee of technical experts to support the economic evaluation of coral reefs.
- Update the 2008 ICRI Report, Economic Values of Coral Reefs, Mangroves, and Seagrasses: A Global Compilation, incorporating the latest data and analysis.
- Develop and standardise unified methods for calculating the economic value of coral reefs.
- Leverage the standardised method to support some ICRI member countries in implementing the new standard, with the aim of helping to secure long-term finance and resources for coral reef conservation.

BLUE ECONOMY: CORAL REEFS MATTER



Carol Phua

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



BLUE ECONOMY: CORAL REEFS MATTER

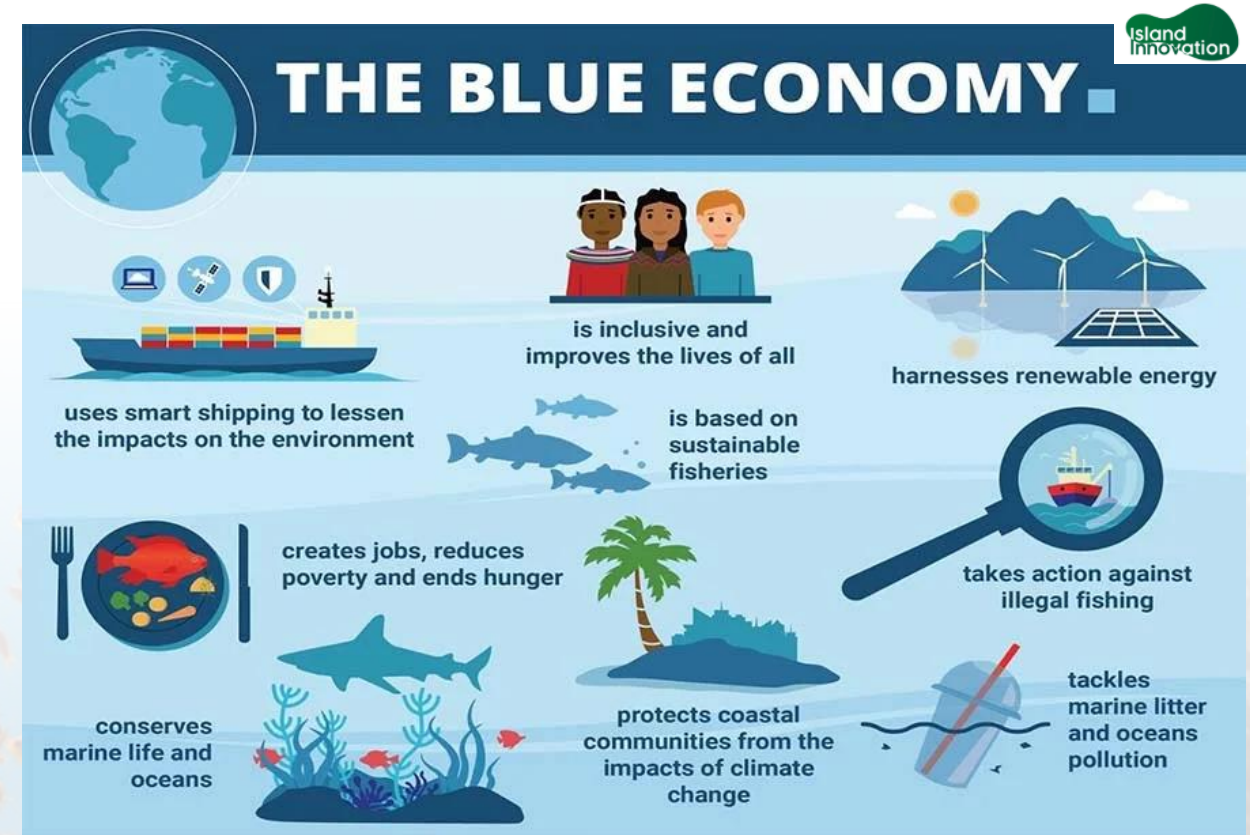
Background

Investing in coral reefs is investing in a sustainable and regenerative blue economy

The sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs, while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems.

Emphasises resource efficiency, minimises waste, and reuse of materials – embedded sustainability at its centre.

It encompasses various sectors, including fisheries, tourism, aquaculture, shipping, and renewable energy from the ocean.





BLUE ECONOMY: CORAL REEFS MATTER

Illustrative Activities

- Develop an online Blue Economy toolkit for coral reefs that will provide guidelines and best practices on the effective and critical management of coral reefs across Blue Economy Sectors.
- Establish an ICRI *ad hoc* committee on the Blue Economy to oversee and support the production of the Blue Economy Toolkit, including the conduction of a consultation process with ICRI members.
- Produce accessible resource material including, but not limited to, blue economy sector introductions, videos/resources, best practices, guidelines and case studies, including, where feasible, examples of legal instruments currently exemplified by ICRI members and other coral reef countries or international agreements.

The world has lost 14% of its coral reefs since 2009. Investing in a blue economy gives us a shot at **saving the rest**

World Economic Forum

RESTORATION AND INNOVATION



Jessica Stella

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



RESTORATION AND INNOVATION

Background

Coral reef restoration has emerged as a key management strategy to combat dramatic declines in coral reef health and cover globally and is seen as a mechanism to help countries deliver on national and international commitments under multilateral environmental agreements. As coral reefs continue to degrade, new techniques are urgently needed to aid their recovery, restore their functions, and adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Global Restoration Efforts Growing

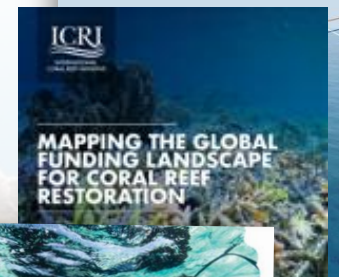
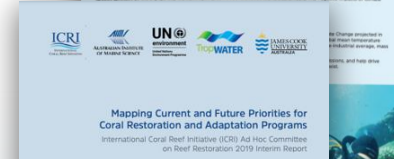
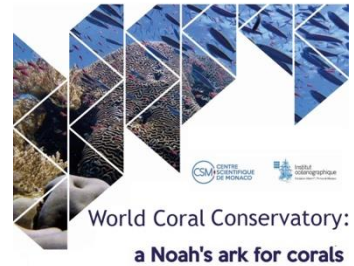
- Restoration at scale won't happen if we work in silos.
- Part of an essential **suite of tools** for restoring reef structure, enhancing ecological functions, and improving resilience to stressors.

Challenges

- Costly and limited in scale.
- Unable to meet urgent global demand.
- Need for accessible solutions for developing countries and coastal communities.

Innovative Technologies: Scaling Up Restoration

- Alongside traditional restoration techniques, emerging technologies such as AI and Machine Learning.
- Remote Sensing and Drone Mapping: Real-time monitoring and better modelling for recovery.
- The genetic management to preserve coral genetics and species diversity such as the World Coral Conservatory, a “Noah’s Ark” for corals.





RESTORATION AND INNOVATION

Illustrative Activities

- Update the UNEP and ICRI report “Coral Reef Restoration: A Guide to Coral Restoration Methods”, incorporating a new section on cutting-edge technologies, enhancing the resource’s relevance and practical application, including further expansion on thermal tolerant corals and genetic management.
- Support the increase of contributions from ICRI members to the World Coral Conservatory (WCC).
- Foster activities that support technology-sharing among nations to ensure accessibility and scalability of advancements.
- Develop and implement a decision-tree for funding agencies, providing clear guidelines on how to prioritise and allocate resources for coral reef restoration projects, streamlining funding efforts.

All this work will be done in close collaboration with the ICRI ad hoc committee on Reef Restoration and relevant ICRI members.

ADDRESS LOCAL THREATS



Margaux Monfared

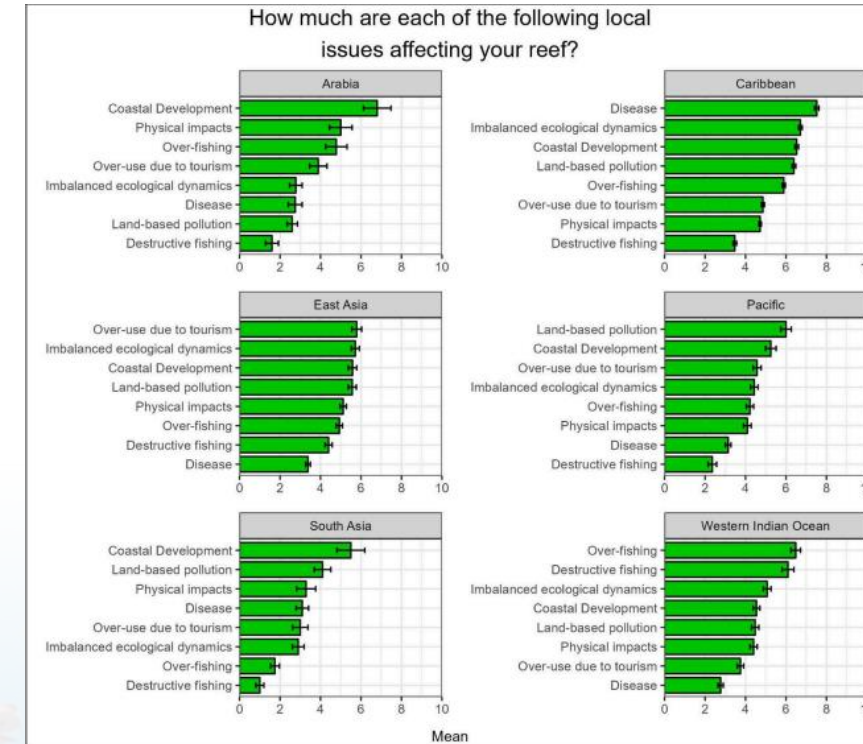
ICRI Secretariat



ADDRESS LOCAL THREATS

Background

- Local threats such as wastewater pollution, overfishing, and coastal development have a significant impact on the health and resilience of coral reef ecosystems. These pressures, primarily driven by human activities, can exacerbate the challenges that coral reefs face, including those caused by climate change.
- Addressing local threats is essential for enhancing the **resilience** of coral reefs and ensuring their long-term survival.
- Top issues affecting local reefs **vary significantly by region**, including coastal development, destructive fishing, land-based pollution, and disease.
- However, many of these local and regional threats stem from sources that can be **proactively managed**. Effective management of these threats is crucial, as it enables the reduction or elimination of negative pressures on coral reefs.
- Focusing on natural recovery processes, reducing stressors, and protecting recovery zones are vital to supporting coral reefs' natural resilience and recovery.



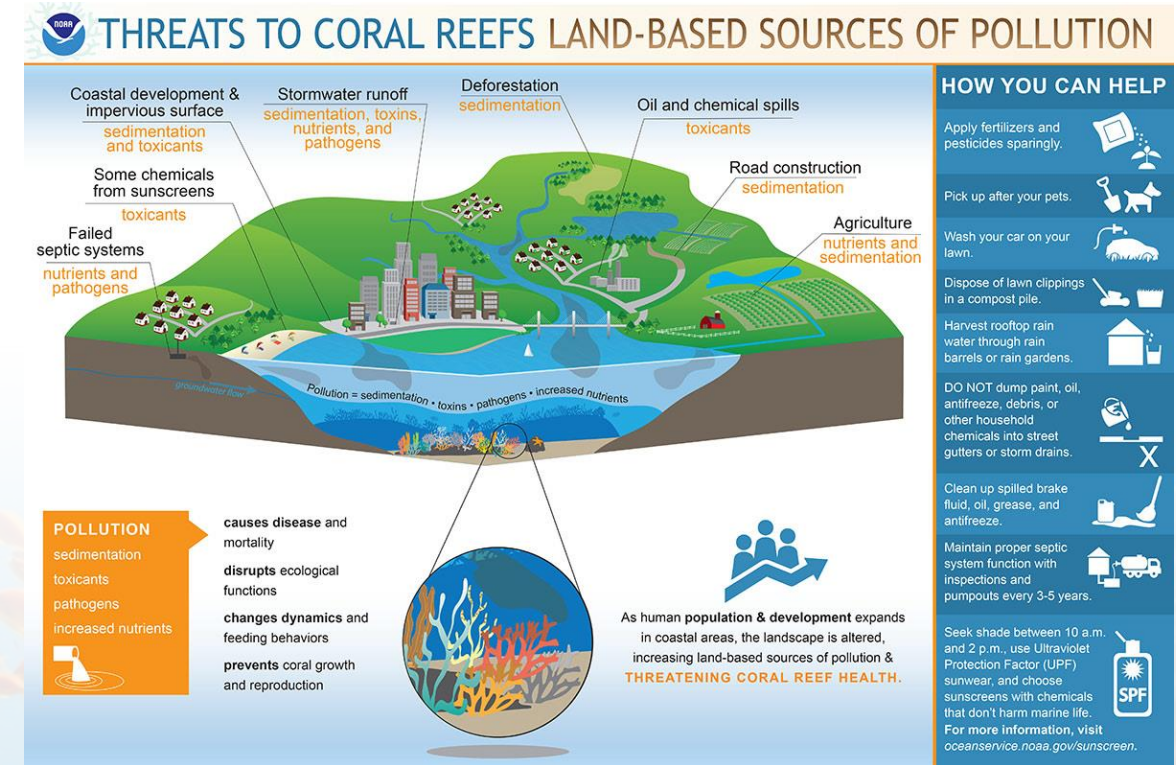
Results of the 2023
Survey of Coral
Restoration Practitioners
Needs



ADDRESS LOCAL THREATS

Illustrative Activities

- Collaborate with the Reef Resilience Network to implement training on local threat management to better assist coral reef practitioners to address human-driven stressors.
- Build on previous ICRI work related to integrated response plans and the need for integrated response planning, sharing good practices.
- Undertake a survey of coastal managers, governments, and NGOs to assess current emergency response planning efforts for coral reefs and identify gaps or areas for improvement.



DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE CAPACITY



Ian Mcleod

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



DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE CAPACITY

Background

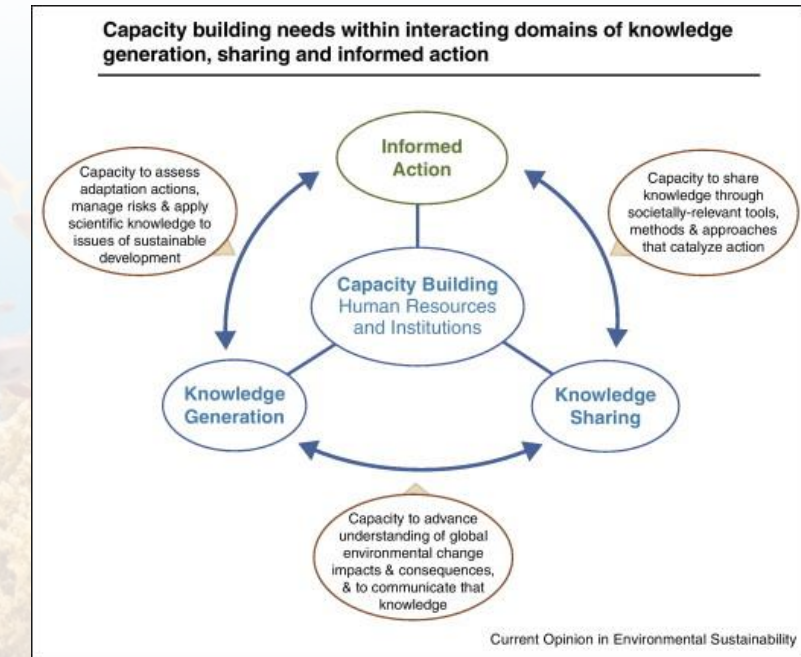
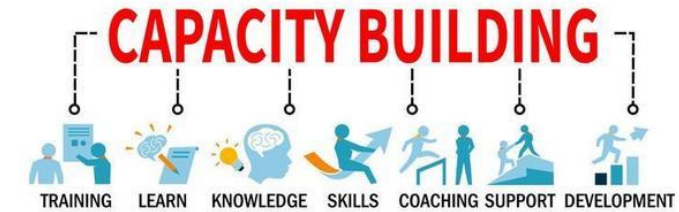
Developing knowledge capacity is essential in a rapidly evolving world. It empowers individuals and organisations to adapt to changes, innovate, and solve complex problems effectively. By continually expanding knowledge and enhancing learning processes, we can build a foundation for informed decision-making, increased efficiency, and sustained growth. Whether in coral reef education, business, or technology, the goal is to strengthen knowledge capacity around the critical importance of coral reef ecosystems and elevate their role in the broader environmental conversation.

Important for coral reef managers and practitioners:

- Informed decision-making.
- Better adaptation to environmental changes.
- Improved resource management.
- Enhances ability to monitor reef health.
- Collaborate with stakeholders.
- Advocate for effective policies.

Impact

- Develop resilient conservation strategies
- Promote sustainable practices
- Ensure long-term protection of coral reefs





DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE CAPACITY

Illustrative Activities

- Support the implementation of the Reef Resilience Network's online tools and courses.
- Continue the #ForCoral Webinar series.
- Support the effective dissemination of knowledge by translating key materials and resources into multiple languages, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity wherever feasible.

RAISE AWARENESS



Chico Birrell

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



RAISE AWARENESS

Background

By increasing awareness, we can inspire global action to protect these vital ecosystems and ensure their survival for the future.

Ask the Expert Series: ICRI launched the Ask the Expert series, featuring expert-led videos that provide in-depth knowledge on the importance of coral reefs and the urgent threats they face. This platform offers scientists, conservationists, and researchers an opportunity to share their expertise, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges at hand.

ICRI Website: Platform to share updated content on coral reefs and associated ecosystems to engage and inform the global community on coral reef conservation.

International Year of the Reef (IYOR): The first IYOR was declared in 1997 to raise awareness about the increasing threats to coral reefs and related ecosystems like mangroves and seagrasses.

International Events: Raise awareness about coral reefs at international negotiations and events by organising side events, high-level breakfasts, #ForCoral Pavilions, and panel sessions. These platforms can amplify the importance of coral reef conservation, engage key stakeholders, and drive actionable solutions to protect these vital ecosystems.

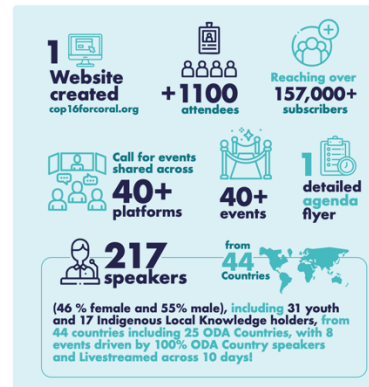


#FORCORAL PAVILION IN NUMBERS

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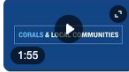
The #ForCoral Pavilion provided a much-needed rallying point at COP 16 to galvanise attention and energy for coral reefs. The many events hosted at the Pavilion reflected the strong engagement of ICRI and the coral reef community at COP 16, which carried over into positive momentum in the negotiating halls.”

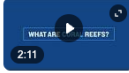
Joseph Appelt,
Secretariat of the Convention
on Biological Diversity

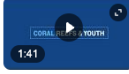


Videos :

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Corals and Small Islands - ICRI Ask the Expert Series
YouTube · International Coral Reef Initiative
15 Jan 2024
- 

Corals and Local Communities - ICRI Ask the Expert Series
YouTube · International Coral Reef Initiative
15 Jan 2024
- 

What are Coral Reefs? - ICRI Ask the Expert Series
YouTube · International Coral Reef Initiative
15 Jan 2024
- 

Coral Reefs and Youth - ICRI Ask the Expert Series
YouTube · International Coral Reef Initiative
15 Jan 2024

RAISE AWARENESS

Illustrative Activities

- Effective communication of coral reefs and associated ecosystems through ICRI's communication channels (LinkedIn, website and YouTube).
- Revamp and launch a new and functional ICRIForum website, including a member's intra-net match making service to facilitate ICRI member exchanges on a timely basis.
- Prepare for the International Year of the Reef (IYOR) 2028.
- Advocate for the establishment of a United Nations International Day for Coral Reefs.
- Identify and film experts on current coral reef issues for ICRI's "Ask the Experts" video series, providing in-depth knowledge and insights.

30X30: SCALE GLOBAL CONSERVATION MEASURES



Carol Phua

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



30X30: SCALE GLOBAL CONSERVATION MEASURES

Background

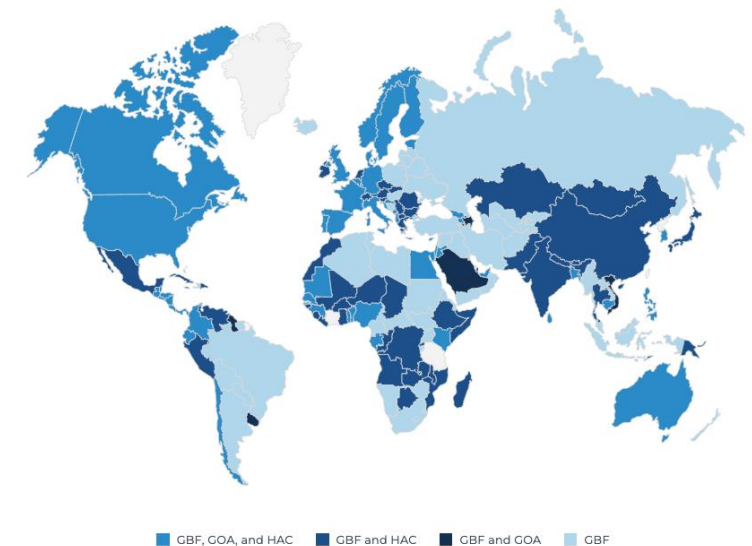
More than **190 countries** have committed to the global **30x30** target, which aims to effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of the world's lands, oceans, and freshwater, by 2030.

39% of coral reef habitat is currently within protected and conserved areas through Area-based Management Tools (ABMT), with the Coral Reef Breakthrough calling for an additional 65,000 km² to be effectively protected by 2030, transcending global targets.

Conservation measures, beyond Area-based Management Tools, including Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Other **Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM)** must ensure that coral reefs are effectively managed with conservation strategies that consider climate change adaptation and implement a diverse suite of **integrated management measures** (including active and pro-active interventions, passive restoration and direct threat abatement).

Additionally, OECM can recognise and support conservation efforts that occur outside protected areas, helping to achieve broader biodiversity conservation goals.

Countries committed to 30x30



30X30: SCALE GLOBAL CONSERVATION MEASURES

Illustrative Activities

- Advocate for the conservation of coral reefs in regions most vulnerable to climate change, and climate-refugia reefs, and address the underrepresentation of reefs providing vital coastal protection.
- Provide case studies of OECMs for coral reefs.
- Support the inclusion of ecosystem-based approaches into coral reef management plans.
- Develop capacity of managers and governments to establish new and/or enhance and expand existing ABMTs for the high and full protection of coral reefs and associated ecosystems.



CROSS CUTTING FOCUS AREAS

Coral reefs occur in **over 100 countries, territories, and local economies**, and support the livelihoods and well-being of up to one billion people (13% of the global population). Diversity and inclusion are therefore essential for ensuring effective conservation, protection and restoration of coral reef ecosystems.

- All activities of the ICRI Plan of Action will take into consideration:
 - **Indigenous local knowledge** holders,
 - The voices of **youth** and **underrepresented** communities
 - Small Island Developing States (Large Ocean States) and
 - Ensure **equitable governance and financing**.
- This will guide the integration of diverse perspectives and expertise across sectors, fostering inclusivity and promoting fairness. The approach will ensure that decision-making processes are participatory, reflect the needs of marginalised groups, and are supported by sustainable, equitable financial mechanisms.
- By integrating this into all actions, it will drive a more inclusive plan of action with just outcomes for all stakeholders involved, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued in the process.



TAILORED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TTA)

- Establish a "Tailored Technical Assistance" (TTA) programme to support coral reef and ecosystem protection and management projects.
- TTA provides both financial and technical support (e.g., staff time, knowledge exchange).
- The programme will be transversal across the Plan of Action and its activities.
- Built on the successful Small-Grants Programme model.
- Aims to enhance technical and financial capacity and provide resilience in uncertain funding environments.
- Supports conservation efforts, including Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding.
- Ensures actionable implementation of ICRI-developed guidelines, recommendations, and best practices.
- Coral Reefs and AI

TIMELINE

