ICRI

INTERNATIONAL
CORAL REEF INITIATIVE

IMPACT REPORT 2025



IMPACT REPORT
FOREWORD



The year 2025 marked an important period of progress for the International Coral Reef Initiative. As pressures on coral reefs continued to intensify, the value of coordination, shared purpose, and sustained collaboration across the international community became increasingly clear. In this context, ICRI's role as a platform for cooperation and alignment has remained essential.

Throughout the year, ICRI supported collaboration among governments, international organisations, scientists, and partners to strengthen the recognition of coral reefs within global policy processes. Coral reefs are increasingly understood not only as ecosystems of high ecological value, but as critical to climate resilience, livelihoods, and sustainable development—reinforcing the need for integrated, collective approaches to their conservation.

Progress was also underpinned by continued investment in global monitoring and knowledge generation. Collective contributions to coral reef monitoring have strengthened the evidence base needed to guide decisions, prioritise action, and support accountability in a rapidly changing ocean.

As ICRI looks ahead, the challenge is clear: to move beyond shared concern and ensure that collective commitment is translated into coordinated action that delivers tangible outcomes for coral reefs worldwide.

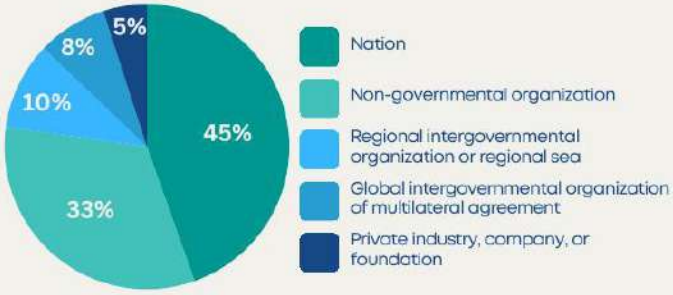
Dr Khaled Asfahani
ICRI Chair & SHAMS CEO

2025 IN NUMBERS



15 Countries signatories for global commitment to climate-resilient reefs

40+ Sessions convened at global fora (UNOC-3, IUCN WCC)



124 Nations and territories contributing data to GCRMN global coral reef assessment



5 **#ForCoral** Webinars, in collaboration with *Reef Resilience Network*

75% Coral reefs represented

15800+ LinkedIn followers

2025 KEY EVENTS

- ICRI
- GCRMN

J — GCRMN Steering Committee Meeting, *Online*

F — ICRI Secretariat Handover Ceremony, *Online*; Communities of Ocean Action, *South Korea*

M

A — Our Ocean Conference *Busan, Korea*

M

J — GCRMN Launch of Status and Trends of Coral Reefs of the Pacific 1980-2023, *Nice France*

J — United Nations Ocean Conference, *Nice, France*

A

S — GCRMN Steering Committee Meeting, *Online*

O — IUCN World Conservation Congress, *Abu Dhabi, UAE*

N

D — UN Environment Assembly, *Nairobi, Kenya*; GCRMN Launch of Status and Trends of Caribbean Coral Reefs 1970-2024, *Online*



CORAL REEFS AT A GLOBAL TURNING POINT

Coral reefs continued to face unprecedented pressure in 2025. The ongoing fourth global coral bleaching event reinforced scientific warnings that climate change, combined with local stressors, is pushing many reef systems toward ecological thresholds. At the same time, growing global momentum around biodiversity, climate adaptation, and blue economy investment created new opportunities to elevate reefs within international policy and finance frameworks.

Within this context, ICRI's role as a member-driven partnership became increasingly important: convening diverse actors, aligning messages across forums, and ensuring that coral reefs remained visible, evidence-based, and solutions-oriented within global processes.

GOVERNANCE & INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING



2.1 Secretariat Leadership and Direction

Under the chairmanship of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and with SHAMS assuming Secretariat responsibilities, 2025 focused on strengthening governance continuity, transparency, and strategic coherence. Emphasis was placed on:

- Supporting members through major global policy processes
- Clarifying ICRI's strategic priorities
- Reinforcing the Secretariat's coordination and convening role

The December 2025 Online Members Meeting served as a collective checkpoint, enabling reflection on progress since the previous General Meeting and alignment on priorities moving into 2026.



2.2 Membership and Community Growth

ICRI received sixteen new membership applications in 2025, including new country members such as Somalia and Trinidad and Tobago, alongside international organizations and partners. This growth reflects ICRI's continued relevance as a neutral, inclusive platform for coral reef action.

Membership expansion will enhance geographic representation, technical diversity, and opportunities for regional collaboration, particularly among Small Island Developing States and emerging coral reef leaders.

GLOBAL ADVOCACY & POLICY IMPACT

3.1 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3), *Nice, France*

ICRI played a central role at UNOC-3, supporting delivery of the Coral Pavilion as a focal point for reef science, policy, finance, and culture. The Pavilion hosted over 40 sessions, screened films, and convened more than 100 high-level speakers.



Pavilion Highlights:

- **40+ Sessions & Dialogues**: Technical workshops, high-level discussions, and public forums addressing reef restoration, finance, and policy innovation.
- **100+ Expert Speakers**: Leaders from government, science, and civil society shared insights on coral resilience, climate adaptation, and nature-based economies.
- **10 Ocean Films**: Storytelling from across the globe showcased the human and ecological dimensions of reef conservation.
- **Thousands of Visitors from 120+ Countries**: Ministers, youth networks, journalists, and ocean advocates engaged directly with ICRI teams, including a Royal visit from HRH Princess Eugenie of York.

Key outcomes included:

- Launch of national coral strategies, including Brazil's Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Coral Reefs (ProCoral), a milestone in the country's efforts to protect reef ecosystems.
- Expansion of a high-level global commitment on climate-resilient coral reefs.
- Strengthened visibility for reef resilience, restoration, and finance solutions.

GLOBAL ADVOCACY & POLICY IMPACT

3.2 IUCN World Conservation Congress, *Abu Dhabi, UAE*

The IUCN World Conservation Congress marked a milestone for coral reef policy. Through the #ForCoral Pavilion, ICRI elevated reef issues across science, valuation, finance, and monitoring, reaching thousands of participants.

A landmark achievement was the adoption of IUCN Motion 037, the first resolution formally addressing coral bleaching. The motion calls for urgent, coordinated global action and reflects the growing recognition of bleaching as a systemic risk to coral reefs worldwide.





GLOBAL ADVOCACY & POLICY IMPACT



3.3 UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), *Nairobi, Kenya*

At UNEA-7, ICRI supported the development and successful adoption—by full consensus—of a UNEA resolution on accelerating global action to promote coral reef climate resilience, sponsored by Fiji and co-sponsored by multiple countries.

The resolution:

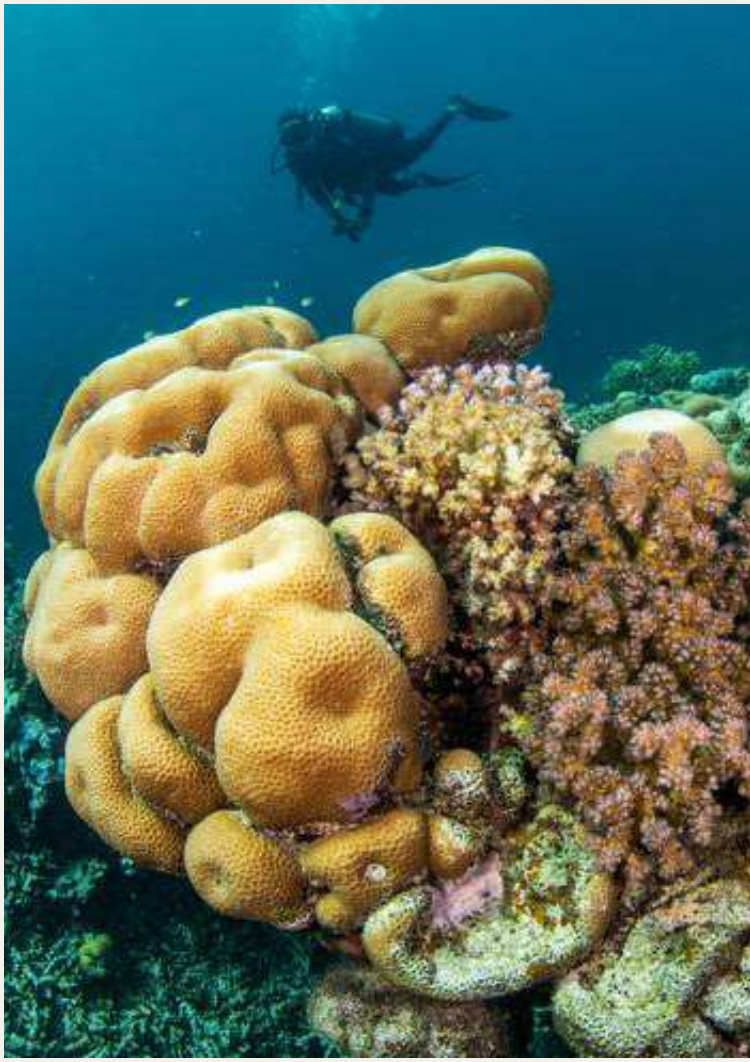
- Encourages integration of coral reefs into national biodiversity and climate planning
- Calls for strengthened monitoring and data sharing through mechanisms such as GCRMN
- Requests UNEP collaboration with ICRI and partners, subject to resources

This outcome positioned coral reefs firmly within the global environmental policy architecture.



SCIENCE & KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION

4.1 Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)



In 2025, GCRMN advanced one of the most comprehensive global coral reef assessments ever undertaken. Drawing on nearly 100,000 surveys across 124 nations and territories, the forthcoming Status of Coral Reefs of the World report represents a major leap in analytical rigor, spatial coverage, and policy relevance.
Key features include:

- Integration of data spanning more than five decades
- Explicit treatment of global bleaching events and recovery trajectories
- Regional and sub-regional analyses across ten regions

For the first time, the report benefited from extensive external scientific review coordinated with the International Coral Reef Society, strengthening credibility and transparency.

4.2 Regional Reports & Insights

Two major regional reports were highlighted in 2025:

- Pacific Status and Trends Report (1980–2023): documenting long-term stability in coral cover alongside shifts in community composition and rising macroalgae.
- Caribbean Status and Trends Report (1970–2024): revealing a 48% long-term decline in coral cover and an 85% increase in macroalgal cover, while also highlighting hopeful case studies and management pathways.

These reports reinforced the importance of sustained monitoring, region-specific responses, and science-based decision-making.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Coral Webinar Series

In partnership with the Reef Resilience Network, ICRI delivered a highly successful Coral Webinar Series throughout 2025. Topics ranged from artificial intelligence in reef conservation to bleaching updates and regional monitoring insights. Individual webinars attracted 280–400 participants, reflecting strong global demand for applied, accessible knowledge.

5.2 Ad Hoc Committees

Two ad hoc committees were active during 2025, each addressing priority areas where coordinated action was needed to strengthen ICRI's impact.

- Youth Ad Hoc Committee: focused on strengthening the meaningful engagement of early-career professionals and young leaders in coral reef conservation. Through surveys, gap analyses, and collaborative drafting, the Committee developed a Youth Strategy that identifies pathways for participation, highlights youth leadership case studies, and proposes mechanisms to better integrate youth perspectives into ICRI processes.
- Restoration Ad Hoc Committee:addressed gaps in regulatory frameworks for coral reef restoration. By engaging practitioners and policymakers and reviewing existing legislation, the Committee developed a structured approach to help governments assess and strengthen enabling conditions for safe, effective, and scalable restoration. These outputs provide a practical foundation for aligning restoration practice with policy and supporting long-term, strategic restoration efforts.

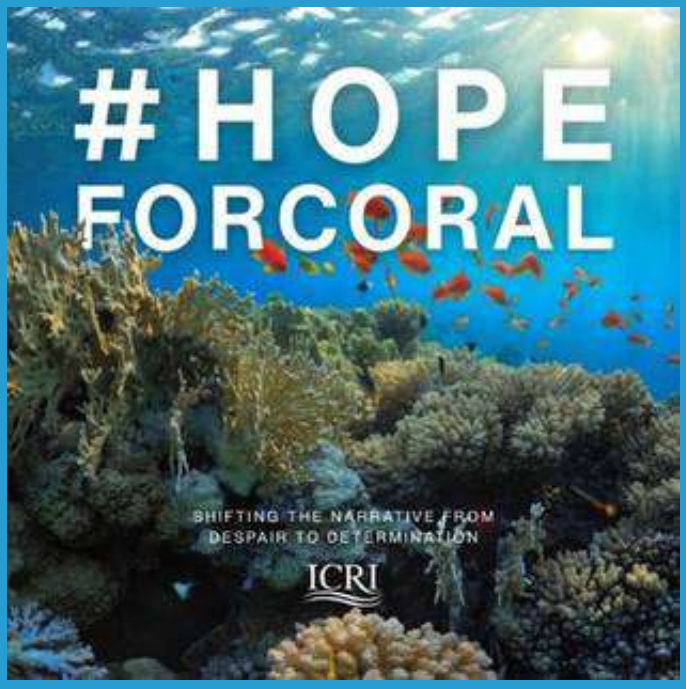


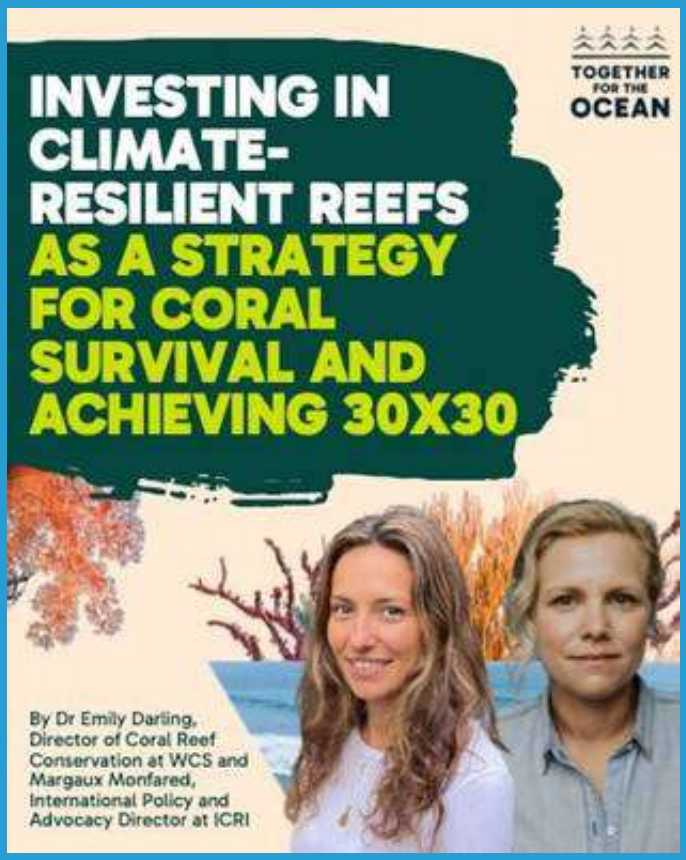
COMMUNICATIONS & SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE

ICRI continued to expand its communications reach in 2025, engaging over 15,400 followers on LinkedIn and more than 4,500 newsletter subscribers. A deliberate narrative shift—from despair toward determined optimism—was reflected in campaigns such as #HopeForCoral, highlighting resilience, innovation, and success stories.

This approach supported broader engagement during Coral Bleaching Awareness Month, with participation from 200+ organizations worldwide, reinforcing a shared message that action for reefs remains both possible and effective.

ICRI also supports member communications through collaboration and elevating reach. One example was a collaborative written post with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) for the Together for the Ocean platform, titled “Investing in Climate-Resilient Reefs as a Strategy for Coral Survival and Achieving 30x30.” The article went live on 4th August 2025 and highlighted the urgent need to protect and invest in climate-resilient coral reefs as a critical pathway for achieving the global 30x30 target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.





LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

ICRI enters 2026 with renewed momentum, strengthened partnerships, and a clearer strategic mandate at a time when global attention on coral reefs has never been more urgent—or more aligned. The policy foundations laid in 2025, combined with unprecedented advances in global monitoring and growing convergence between science, policy, and finance, position the Initiative to move decisively from agenda-setting to implementation.

Building on this progress, key priorities for 2026 include:

- Finalization and implementation of the ICRI Plan of Action, translating the consolidated five-pillar framework into coordinated action across members, regions, and global processes.
- Delivery of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network's Status of Coral Reefs of the World report, providing the most comprehensive and policy-relevant assessment of coral reef condition and trends to date.
- Hosting the 39th ICRI General Meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, creating a platform for collective decision-making, shared learning, and alignment on the Initiative's future direction.
- Continued engagement with global policy processes and emerging finance mechanisms, ensuring coral reefs remain embedded within biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development agendas.

As ICRI looks ahead, the focus is firmly on enabling collective action at scale—supporting members to act on shared commitments, strengthening the science that underpins decisions, and ensuring coral reefs are recognised not only as ecosystems at risk, but as critical natural assets for people, economies, and climate resilience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ICRI acknowledges the contributions of its Members, partners, sponsors, and supporters throughout 2025. Progress achieved during the year reflects shared ownership, collaboration, and a collective determination to secure a future for coral reef ecosystems worldwide.