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Initiative Internationale pour les Récifs Coralliens
International Coral Reef Initiative

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International Coral Reef Initiative Encourages Biodiversity Leaders to Prioritize Coral Reefs

Vulnerable reefs deliver significant benefits to global economy and food security

(London, May 22, 2020) Recognizing the urgent need to safeguard the world's coral reefs from further decline, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) delivered its Recommendation to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to be incorporated into the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Framework). On this International Biodiversity Day, ICRI strongly requests CBD Parties to prioritize coral reefs by including clear, specific and measurable indicators that will inform interventions aimed at improving ecosystem resilience, integrity, quality and function.

"The Framework will set the shared objectives and priorities for biodiversity over the next decade to ensure the realization of CBD's vision - that society is living in harmony with nature by 2050," said H.E. Edhy Prabowo, Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Republic of Indonesia. "It is our intention that the Framework goals, targets and indicators make it clear how actions to address coral reef decline contribute to this vision."

ICRI points to the significant benefits of coral reef systems. As reefs decline, so too do the economic contributions from tourism industries, nutrition from the fish as a food source, protection from storm surge and flood damage, research opportunities for medical advances and the cultural wellbeing of millions of people whose lives are connected with coral reefs.

"Although we do not have any coral reefs here in Germany, and they may seem inconsequential to non-coastal countries, the safety, well-being, food and economic security of billions of people depend on this ocean ecosystem in one way or another," said Ilka Wagner, Head of the Marine Nature Conservation Division of the German Federal Environment Ministry. "Estimates indicate coral reefs account for \$2.7 trillion per year in ecosystem service value."

The ICRI Recommendation defines a set of indicators that measure the health, integrity and function of coral reefs including live coral cover, coral reef extent, fish abundance, and coral reef management areas. It also includes indicators that signals alarm including algae cover and coastal water pollution. In developing the indicators, ICRI took into account available and emerging tools and methods to track each one including initiatives offered by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, the Allen Coral Atlas, the World Database on Protected Areas, and various local and regional data collection resources. By monitoring at the national level, countries can determine their progress, learn what is working or not working and rapidly adapt conservation efforts. These metrics will also contribute to a global understanding of coral reef status.

"As a country that literally lives and breathes by virtue of our coral reefs, we understand the need to prioritize and safeguard this fragile ecosystem," said Umiich Sengebau, Minister of Nature Resources, Environment and Tourism for Palau. "It is not enough to just have indicators. Unless they're being used as part of the strategy to change and implement policies, it's just paper and coral reefs could slip further into the abyss."

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In its Recommendation ICRI contends that, as a highly critical and vulnerable ecosystem, taking measures to sustain coral reefs will have a ripple effect on other marine systems. Any conservation actions will have a wider positive impact on other ecosystems and support the goals and targets as articulated in the Framework.

The CBD is expected to adopt the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework during its 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) in 2021.

For more information, visit <https://www.icriforum.org/post2020>

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About International Coral Reef Initiative

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is an informal partnership between Nations and organizations which strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world. Its 40 country members participate in negotiations for the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Although the Initiative is an informal group whose decisions are not binding on its members, its actions have been pivotal in continuing to highlight globally the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to environmental sustainability, food security and social and cultural wellbeing. The work of ICRI is regularly acknowledged in United Nations documents, highlighting the Initiative's important cooperation, collaboration and advocacy role within the international arena.

The ICRI Secretariat is hosted for a determined term (usually two years) by State members, on a voluntary basis, and is currently co-hosted by the governments of Australia, Indonesia and Monaco.

About the Global Biodiversity Framework

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international legally-binding treaty that came into force on 29 December 1993. To date there are 193 Parties. The organization has three main goals: conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Its overall objective is to encourage actions, which will lead to a sustainable future.

The CBD will adopt a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework as a stepping stone towards the 2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with nature." In its decision 14/34, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD adopted a comprehensive and participatory process for the preparation of the Framework that will be undertaken by a dedicated open-ended intersessional working group under the leadership of its two co-chairs, Mr. Francis Ogwal (Uganda) and Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada) and overseen by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties.

More information <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020>